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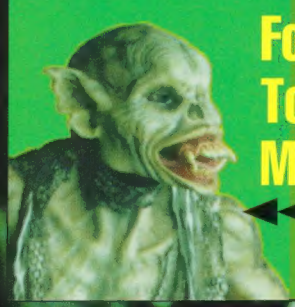

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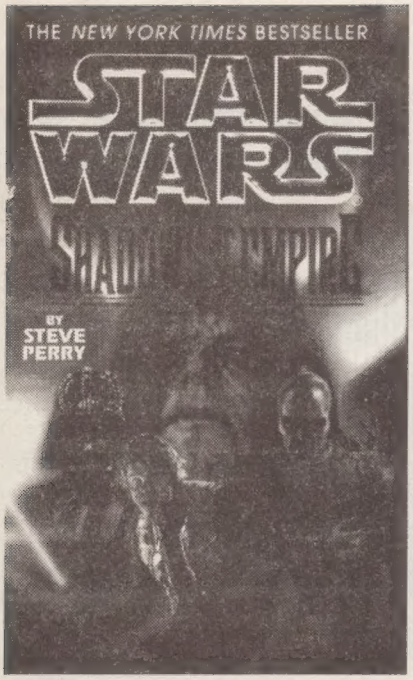

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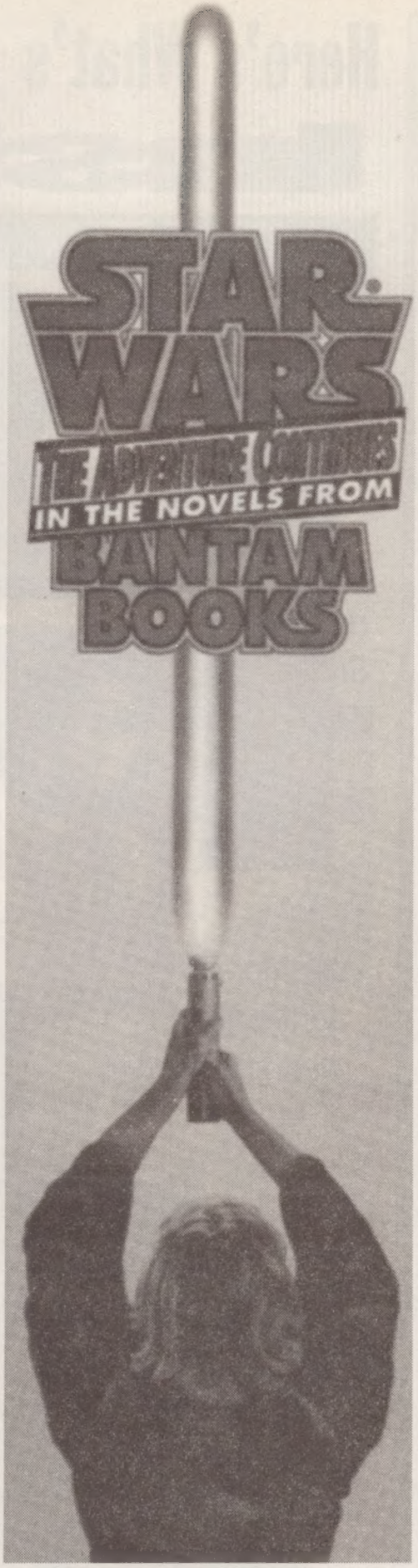

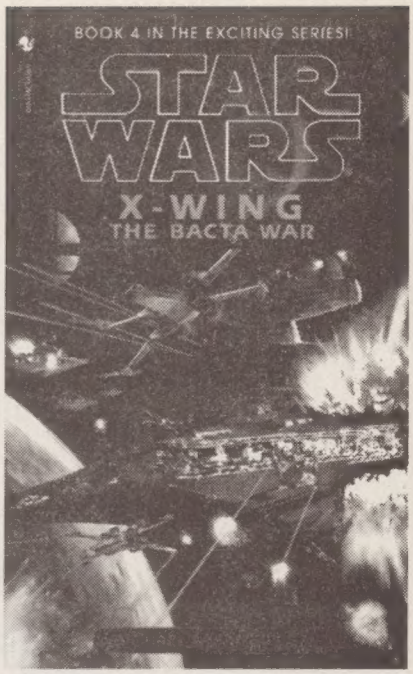

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Parsec, volume 2 number 2

UPC — 56698-71606-06

Parsec is published by the Parsec Publishing Company, Unit G. Suite 108, 1942 Regent St., Sudbury, Ont., Canada, P3E 3Z9

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Subscription rate (not including applicable taxes): six issues — $25.50, twelve issues — $51.

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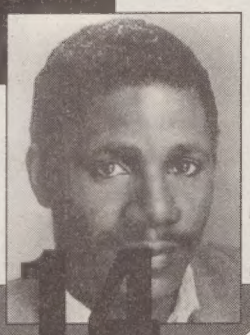

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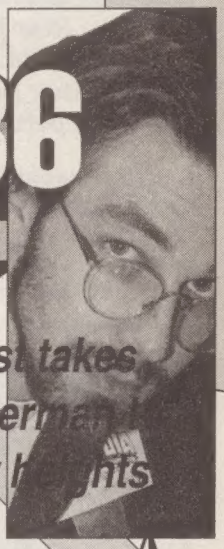

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Publisher's notebook

Toronto deserves Worldcon

Worldcons are the pinnacle when it comes to science fiction conventions.

Each year, usually around the first weekend of September, thousands of fans converge on a city for a five-day celebration of science fiction (with a little fantasy and horror tossed in for good measure).

They travel from across the globe to meet authors, actors and the behind-the-scenes people from movies and television, and attend the Nebula and Hugo awards ceremonies. They're also there to meet and share their interests with other fans. And these fans are not of the run-of-the-mill variety. Besides travelling and accommodation expenses, they are expected to plop down anywhere from $150 to $300 for tickets to the event. But lets face it, it's *the* convention of the year.

Last year, the Worldcon was held in Anaheim, CA., the year before in Glasgow, Scotland, and this year its set to take place in San Antonio, Texas.

From then on, it's heading for Baltimore, Md., and Melbourne, Australia.

The conventional wisdom among Worldcon followers is that the event will mark the millennium in Chicago — the city which has hosted the event the most times since its inception in 1939. And three years after that, if a small group of Canadian fans have their way, the Worldcon will be in Toronto.

If the group is successful in making their pitch for the city, it would also mark the 30th anniversary of the last time Toronto hosted a Worldcon. It would also be the second time in a decade that a Canadian city plays host to these fans.

In 1994, Winnipeg hosted the convention and attracted 3,600 people and pumped about $9 million into the city's economy.

The group, which numbers about 30, has its work cut out for them.

The bid process is a long one. It takes about three years to take the bid from its first tentative steps to a final decision by the organizing committee. The decision on the site for the 2003 convention will be announced at the 2000 convention.

So far, the Toronto committee — which also includes members from other parts of southern Ontario and the organizer of the Winnipeg convention, John Mansfield — has held a handful of meetings.

One of the driving forces of the group, Lloyd Penney, said the plan is to incorporate a number of facilities like Massey Hall in Metro Toronto as part of the Worldcon.

Penney and his wife, Yvonne, (who helped found the predecessor to the Toronto Trek convention) have managed to attract such luminaries as authors Rob Sawyer and Edo Van Belkom to the cause. The inclusion of these rising stars in science fiction and horror automatically adds strength and credibility to the effort.

Thus far, the field seems clear for the Toronto bid. The only potential competition, to date, is a U.S.-backed bid for Cancun, Mexico.

Penney hopes to get the city's tourism officials to back the plan. And why shouldn't they? The boost to the economy is just too large to be ignored — by any city.

The 1993 Worldcon in San Francisco attracted 7,100 people, while the Glasgow Worldcon attracted more than 4,200 people and the Anaheim convention had about 6,700 visitors during its run.

Penney believes that, if ticket prices are kept relatively low, then attendance at the Toronto convention will be high and break the downward trend of Worldcon attendance figures.

By way of comparison, the 1984 Worldcon in Los Angeles attracted 8,500 people. Since then, ticket prices have climbed steadily.

"It's just gotten too expensive," Penney laments.

To reduce the costs, Penney explains, the bid committee is establishing a $20 pre-supporting membership plan.

The plan would serve a number of purposes. It would help the bid committee gauge the level of interest in a Toronto Worldcon, it would provide funding for promotional material and it would reduce admission costs for these members if the bid was successful.

But given the level of support that other Toronto-area conventions have received in the past, as well as the facilities available to the convention and its guests, it's hard to believe the Toronto bid has a chance of failing. And it shouldn't.

— Chris

Updated information on the bid process and the membership plan can be obtained by writing to: Toronto in 03, P.O. Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ont., M5W 1A2.

The Worldcon can also be found on the Internet at http://worldcon.org

Late News

Toronto-based Atlantis Communications Inc. has announced it will be producing 22 episodes of a series based on an idea from the late Gene Roddenberry.

Originally called Battleground Earth, the series is set in the near future and will relate mankind's struggle to overcome the conquest by an alien invading force.

In late April, studio executives decided to call the new series: Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict. At the same time, they announced the signing of Kevin Kilner for the role of intelligence officer, William Boone. Kilner has appeared in Home Alone 3, Twenty Bucks, Switch, Almost Perfect and Tales From the Crypt.

Atlantis retains worldwide distribution rights for the weekly series, except in the United States where Tribune Entertainment will be airing the syndicated program on its 10 television stations and in 27 of the top 30 television markets.

Production on the series is set to begin on May 21, but no decision on airing dates has been made as of yet.

What's happened to Toronto Trek?

ESSAY

By JAMES ARMSTRONG

I have been attending the Toronto Trek Convention for all of the 10 years it's been around.

I would have to say it is still my most favorite convention. But, after watching it grow over it's first six years I noticed that it seemed to be taking some backward steps of late. So I decided to investigate, to find out what's going on behind the scenes, and here is what I found.

The reason for Toronto Trek's success over the years is directly related to the popularity of Star Trek as a whole, and since the cancellation of the Next Generation, the convention attendance has gone down.

There is also an economic factor to consider, the recession has taken a strangle hold on fandom, and it doesn't look like it's going away anytime soon. But, these problems are forces that we can do little about, so is Toronto doomed to go down with the recession?

I think it's too early to say that, but have a look at the numbers.

Too many chiefs

The published budget of Toronto Trek X was $71,300, and in this year's program, the figures were broken down to show how the money was spent. And the one glaring number that stands out of the group, stood beside the department marked, "Advertising."

Toronto Trek spent only $3,500 on advertising last year, less than 2.5 per cent of their budget! I don't know if anyone in charge of the funds went to business school, but with this low amount budgeted, they may as well not spend anything on advertising. If they did their research they would find the Fortune 500 companies budget anywhere between 20 to 40 per cent of their funds for advertising and promotions.

Another thing that I was surprised to learn about Toronto Trek, was that although the attendance has been slipping over the last few years, the convention committee has been growing. I estimate there are more than 80 people on the committee, and to me that says too many chiefs, not to mention the thousands of dollars they are not making off the excess fat of the con-com.

It was explained to me by many ex-con-committee members as "an ego thing" and many excess committee members are very competitive with one another, and there are internal struggles over positions that hold some "power." This sounds awful. I always thought that the person with the most to offer should get the job, but this system seems like just a game of favorites.

Over the years, Toronto Trek has had some great Star Trek guests, including authors, but this year, none.

Maybe that was part of the budget they decided to cut, but I think it's unfortunate, because it was an author guest who signed on for the first Toronto Trek's and got the ball rolling. Non-Trek guests has become the norm with the convention of late, which I don't think brings up attendance, because we all know that Star Trek guests are the most popular, and this is not a Babylon 5 convention, right?

Conflicts are also something that Toronto Trek has to beware of, even I had heard that Bill Campbell's, Fantasicon was on the same weekend as Toronto Trek last year. What guests did the Trek committee think they were going to get when almost the entire casts from all four series had been invited to a convention in their hometown (Not to mention the loss of the hard-core fans who would have normally attended Toronto Trek)?

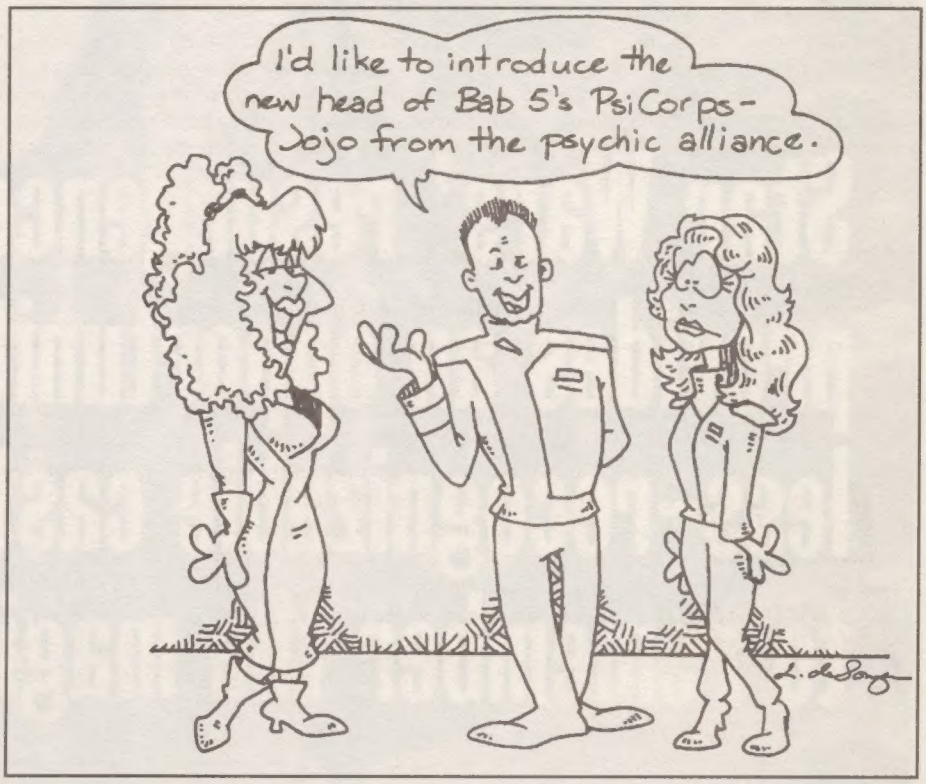
And to me, a guest is a guest. If the committee calls you up to take part in this three-day affair, they should always offer transportation and accommodation even if you are not an actor. I was disgusted to hear that some guests, who do not charge an appearance fee, were excluded from the little advertising there was, were expected to find their own way to the hotel and pay for their own rooms and meals. It's just rude.

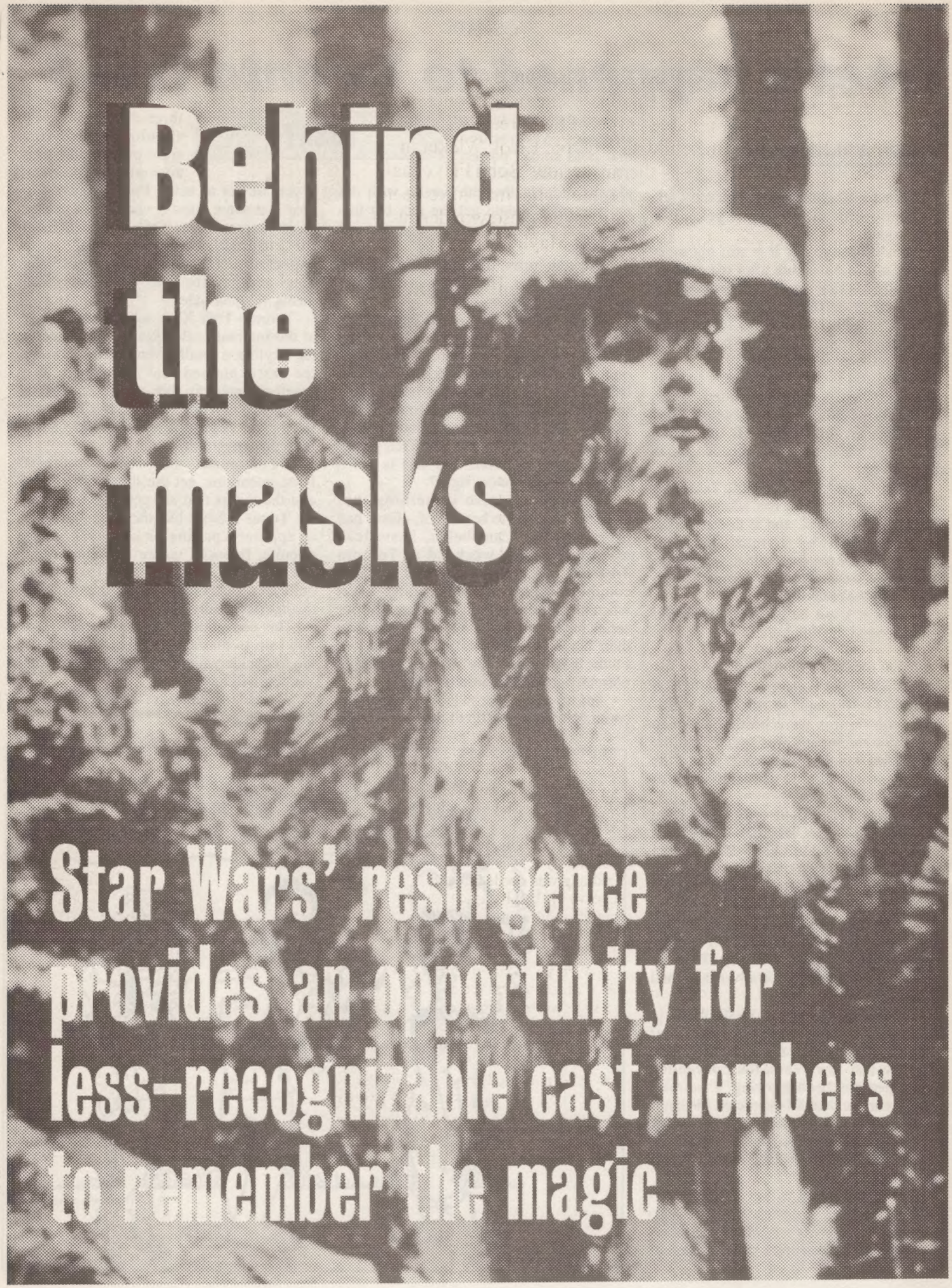
Toronto Trek XI is scheduled for July at the International Plaza Hotel, formerly the Skyline, a smaller venue. The committee has explained that the change to a smaller venue is due to the declining attendance of Toronto Trek. But I wonder if it's the beginning of the end of my favorite convention.

It's unfortunate that so many fans, with good intentions, get the things they love, and the things that are popular, so mixed up. To me it looks like there are two ways to approach putting on a convention, a popular, financial secure convention that the general public, not just fans, embraces, or the convention that the con-chairperson really likes.

This convention is at a crossroads. It is now up to the fans and the con-committee to decide what kind of future the convention will have.

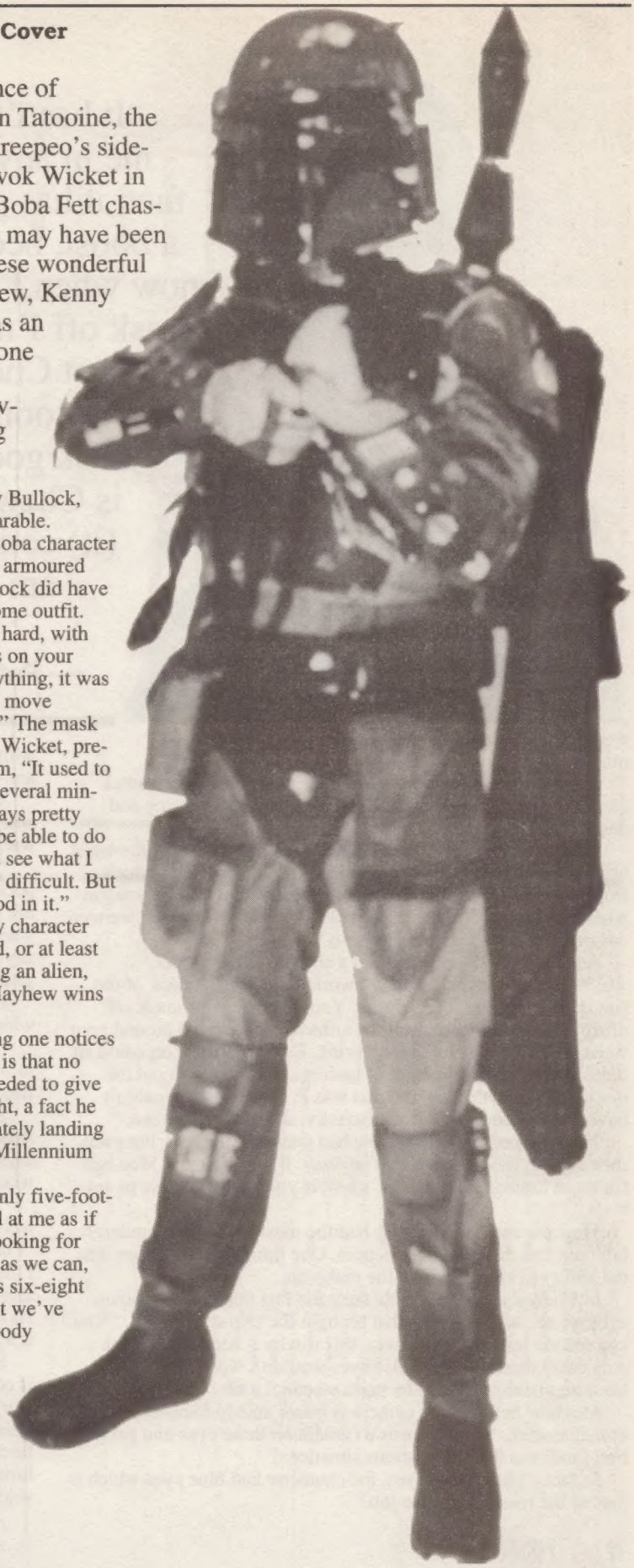
A steady, healthy, existence, or a desperate last gasp.





Behind the masks

Star Wars' resurgence provides an opportunity for less-recognizable cast members to remember the magic



Who can forget the lively first appearance of Chewbacca in the Cantina scene on Tatooine, the clumsy but reliable antics of Seethreepeo's sidekick droid R2D2, maybe the childishly heroic Ewok Wicket in Empire Strikes Back, or perhaps the mysterious Boba Fett chasing Han and carting him away in carbonite? That may have been 20 years ago, but for the actors who portrayed these wonderful characters in LucasFilm's Star Wars, Peter Mayhew, Kenny Baker, Warwick Davis and Jeremy Bullock, it was an experience they will always be thankful for, and one which they all agree can never be topped.

There have been horror stories about actors having to spend grueling hours applying and wearing make-up.

By
JAMES G. BOUTILIER

However, each of these characters had very different experiences in outfit. For Davis, the Ewok costume was nothing more than a hot, padded furball.

"The costume consisted of a foam body and fur overcoat. The foam was to give a rounded shape to the Ewoks, and proved to be really really hot. And when covered with fur it really was like an oven in there. When they put the head on as well. That sealed in the heat. Another thing were the orange tinted eyes . . .the hot air would rise up from the body and steam the eyes up straight away. They drilled holes in the corners, they tried smearing soap on the inside, but nothing really seemed to help."

In fact, acting in an Ewok outfit was nothing less than blind faith.

"You'd have to rehearse with the head off . . . and learn all the steps and obstacles, and once they said 'action,' you'd just have to do it from memory, so it was quite challenging. Also, the bottom of the Ewok feet were made of a foam latex . . . and quite spongy, so when you'd walk you couldn't feel your footing . . . you sort of bounced along. It was just luck whether you'd stay standing up for the whole take. But . . . I was 12 years old, I suppose I had youth on my side, so I managed to stay upright more than alot of others did."

Baker, best know as R2D2 also shared in the discomforts of making Star Wars but he had to endure the entire trilogy.

Was it nerve wracking being enclosed inside a metal barrel (glorified as it may be)?

"It was, it was claustrophobic." Unlike these two actors, portraying Boba Fett was, for Jeremy Bullock, difficult but bearable. However, the Boba character was actually an armoured humanoid, Bullock did have a less cumbersome outfit.

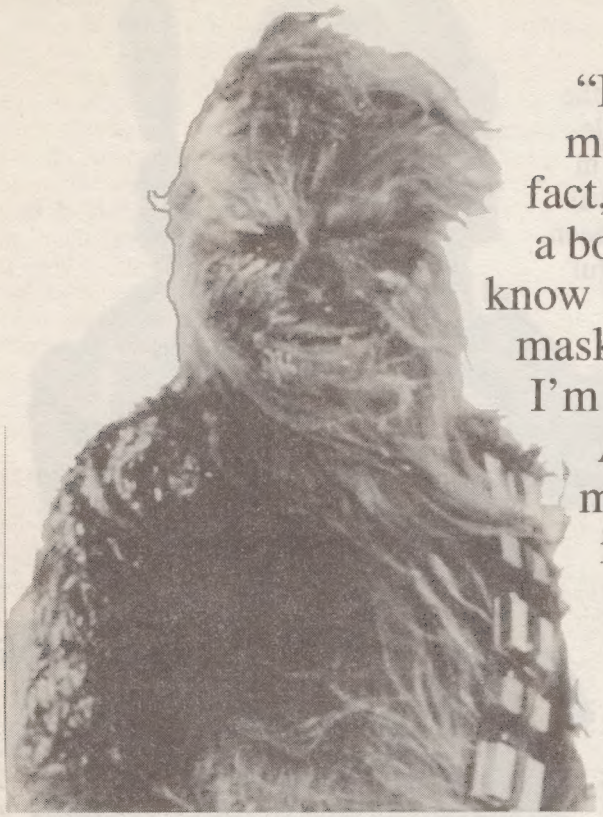
"Yes, it was hard, with the little clamps on your hands and everything, it was a bit difficult to move around quickly." The mask too, like that of Wicket, presented a problem, "It used to steam up after several minutes. It was always pretty tricky to really be able to do a long walk and see what I was doing, very difficult. But still you felt good in it."

By far, if any character actually enjoyed, or at least got used to being an alien, Chewbacca's Mayhew wins hands down.

The first thing one notices about Mayhew, is that no padding was needed to give Chewy his height, a fact he credits to ultimately landing the role on the Millennium Falcon.

"George is only five-foot-four", he looked at me as if to say, 'we're looking for someone as big as we can, we've seen guys six-eight and six-nine, but we've never seen anybody seven-three so, you think you can do it.

"Well, we know the



"It hasn't harmed me in any way. In fact, it has given me a boost, because I know when I take that mask off I'm Peter, I'm not Chewbacca. As soon as that mask goes on that is Chewy, when (it) comes off I am me."

— Peter Mayhew

answer, 'If you're prepared to pay me, why not go out and do it'."

Coming back to make-up, Mayhew is actually very knowledgeable about effects and their affects, and got dressing and undressing down to an art.

"There was no padding in Chewbacca except around the waist, because he is round. Chewy is like a body warmer, very thick from the head, everything. Which basically kept you very warm when we were in Norway, and wasn't too bad even when we were out in the desert. You got used to it."

Actually, the Chewy suit had a cheat — a big zipper.

"When you weren't actually working, down the back of the suit there was a great big zipper. You just take your mask off, unzip it half way down, pull the arms off and wrap it around your waist, and sit down and have a drink. Comfortable. You could sit there three quarters dressed, or undressed. (Then) you put the mask on, zip up the suit and that was it. Otherwise I wouldn't have done it, you know it was so easy, so well thought out."

The only complaint Mayhew had was with the hair, but even then he says it was rather thin anyway. It was Yak and Moe hair for those interested. I guess it's best if you're not allergic to animals."

Mayhew and Davis by far had the most make-up to undergo, but both had different experiences. One thing they did share was the ability to shine through the make-up.

In Chewy's case, Mayhew feels the fact that it was his own eyes we see on the screen that brought the character to life. "You can see the innards of my eyes, this is why it becomes so real. Any other mask that has false eyes wouldn't work as well, because vision is one of the main essential tools."

Mayhew believes the camera is better able to focus on the eyes of a character, "I could focus a camera on these eyes and get reaction (and) use that into various situations."

In fact, "I have blue eyes, the character had blue eyes which is part of the reason I got the job."

In Davis's case, it was the way he could move the character around even through the bulk that created the Ewok's character, and impressed Lucas. In fact, it was this ability that actually upgraded his role from just Joe Ewok to the main character Wicket (and two Ewok movies after that.)

"Originally I was cast as an Ewok, but as the film progressed, George Lucas spotted the movements that I was doing and quite liked it really. Then I was given the character of Wicket the Ewok. So as the film was released I became more of this main character."

If there is one thing all four actors agree on, it's that even though their roles were behind masks, a move that could be damaging to one's career, the roles proved to be very beneficial to their careers.

In Davis's case, this early introduction to Lucas actually started a long time association with LucasFilm and Jim Hensen.

"It was really good for my career because I then went on to do "Caravan of Courage" and "Battle for Endor," again as the Ewok, produced by Lucas. "The Labyrinth" and "Willow," both were Lucas Film productions, "Labyrinth" a co-production with Jim Hensen. So, I mean it was very good for me to get in with that film because it began my association with George Lucas and it's given me a lot of work."

Mayhew feels the role was good for him, in that being a character behind a mask allowed him, and still does, to chose when he wants to be a celebrity or not.

"It hasn't harmed me in any way. In fact, it has given me a boost, because I know when I take that mask off I'm Peter, I'm not Chewbacca. As soon as that mask goes on that is Chewy, when (it) comes off I am me. I can talk to people, converse about anything you want, and also I can go out anywhere I want without getting recognized."

Baker sees Star Wars as one of a long line of great roles, one which furthered his career.

"It did me alot of good more than anything else. I did about 20 movies including Star Wars, Time Bandits, Amadeus, Sleeping Beauty and Labyrinth."

Surprise is what Star Wars has generated in the career of Bullock, both his own surprise that Boba Fett has created the mystery and legend he has become, and surprise to his employers when he goes for a new role.

"This part came up, I was behind the mask, I finished the job, went on to other things. It's helped in this form, that people said, 'You mean you played that guy, the bounty hunter, that was you?' I played a lot of Shakespeare, Hamlet when I was 19, and people said, 'Yeah we know about Hamlet, but you played Boba Fett?' Having been an actor for so long and having done so many things, it's a nice thing to have."

Star Wars has become nothing less than a Legend. The trilogy is considered a cinematic production ahead of its time, both in storyline and in its remarkable special effects and technology. This, too, is a point the actors are quick to agree on, and credit the Lucas's genius for Star Wars' endurance. Just as Star Wars has lasted for 20 years, Star Trek has been around for more than 30 years. Star Trek, however, has continued through many spin-off

series, whereas there has only ever been three Star Wars movies.

What is the difference between their longevity? Actually, Mayhew had the best, most thorough explanation.

"Because it is a better product. It has so much more. It is a movie movie, rather than a TV series, which Star Trek is. I'm not knocking Star Trek . . . but when Gene Roddenberry conceived it, it was done as a TV show, it was never a movie and it never will be. I've talked to guys in the past who've worked on Star Trek's special effects and they say it was never designed as a movie. . . it was designed for television. You look at some of the early stuff, you can see the sets moving. I'm not knocking it but . . . totally different class.

"Star Wars has a lot more characters, who are not only human, aliens and this sort of thing, but they are all believable. Whereas some of the Star Trek stuff is totally unbelievable."

Besides simply being a different class of science fiction, being a movie class rather than TV, Star Wars far surpassed and still does, most movies and television. According to Davis, Star Wars owes its success to Lucas's ability as a storyteller and understanding of his audience.

"George Lucas is an absolute genius when it comes to filmmaking, and he knows what it takes to make a good film, he knows what audiences want. One of the traits of his films is the fact that they're very deep, there's a lot to them. I think these are the sorts of films you can watch over and over again."

For Baker, Star Wars is simply a total package, "It's a really well made movie. It was the first of the classic science fiction movies, with the best special effects, camera and lighting. A lot of people tried to copy it, but they never came to the same standard."

Each of the characters have their own unique thoughts about Star Wars, things that they took away with them, besides the regular hype and appreciation. For Davis, two points concerning himself and Star Wars must be made. Firstly, for Davis and Baker, and other Little People of their time, Lucas provided work in a scarce market, and presented a story where all sizes where present and didn't matter.

"(Lucas) seems to have quite an interesting size in his films, from a Chewbacca down to the Ewoks so it make for interesting shots and look. With the Ewoks he was showing that the Ewoks were a primitive race, but they overcame the Empire's technological advancements through their ingenuity, so size really doesn't matter."

Second, Davis is simply fascinated by the technology of Star Wars and the new advancements being applied to the original movies.

Bullock has been fascinated that Boba Fett has become as big and mysterious as

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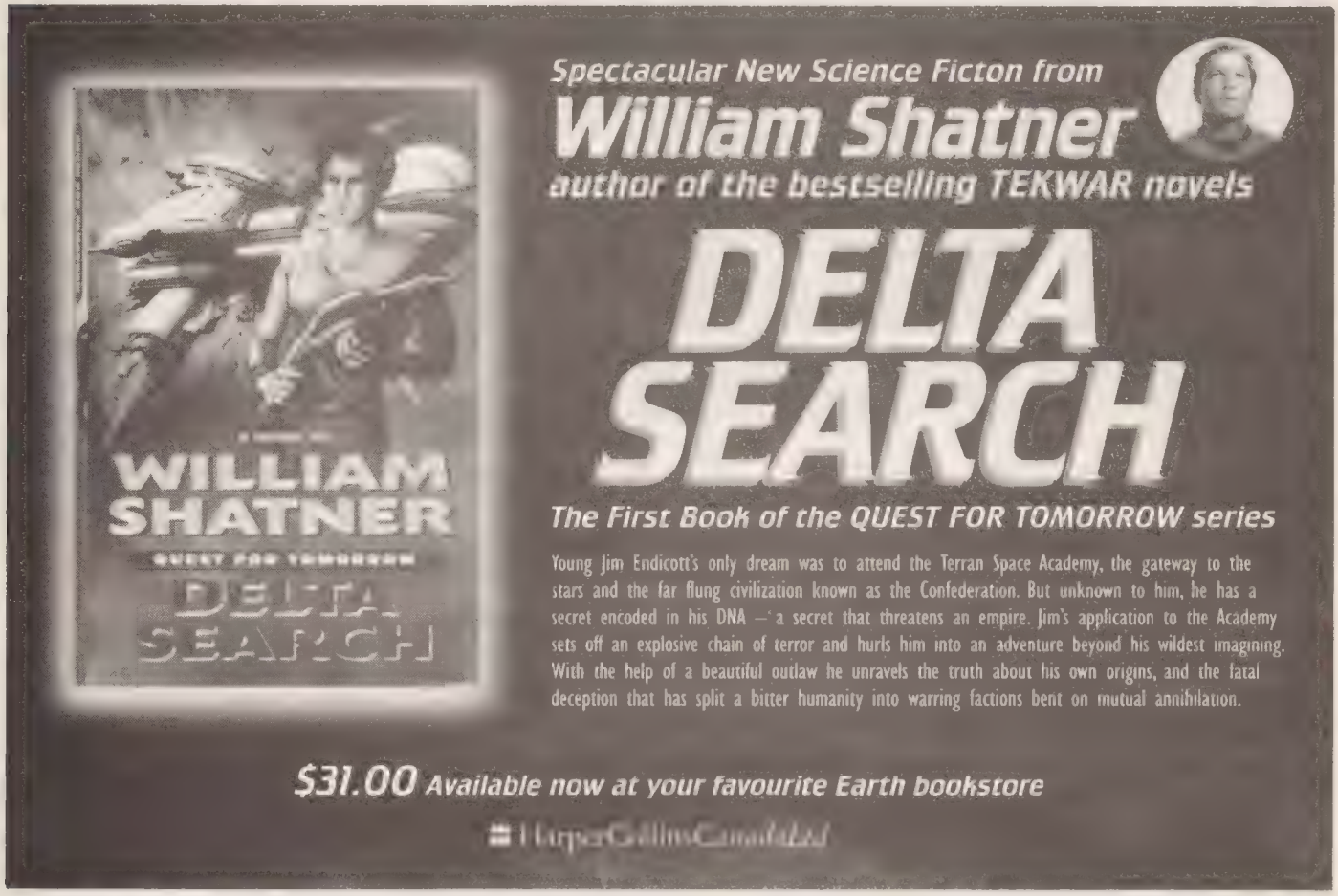
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Don't expect to see Kenny Baker reprise his role as R2D2 in the next installment of the Star Wars saga. Even if the character is in the story, Baker says he would need a robot to be able to handle the part again.

he has, "I mean you see it from how he is being portrayed in comics, the Dark Horse comics, and I get the most extraordinary mail from people that say, 'I listened to you, I grew up with you,' and it's wonderful. I keep saying 'I hope I haven't changed your childhood, I haven't pushed you in the wrong direction or anything.' But he has become a cult hero, which is quite fun."

It would seem that beside the expected but genuine thankfulness for being in the movies, and the popularity it has brought him with the fans, Mayhew is interested in the actual effects and machinery behind the movies.

"Star Wars has got so much more personality to it. When they were doing the special effects they basically had to redesign the cameras and projectors because they had so many overlaps with the effects. Like when they'd jump to light speed, or go through asteroid fields and stuff like that. It was so many overlaps they had to alter the gates (film feed) in the projector case. They probably put three or four more gates on it, so it could run the films at the same time and shot them. It was a revolution in film and it will stay that way. It's part of history, nobody can take it away from him, and I enjoyed doing it."

There has been alot of discussion about whether and when the newest installments of the Star Wars saga would be produced. The inevitable question is, will any of the original cast reprise their roles? Out of the four, it would seem our greatest hopes come from Davis, although not likely as an Ewok.

"I very much doubt that the Ewoks will be featured in the films at all. There's nothing concrete, but I would love to be cast in the next trilogy playing something...There have been suggestions made, it has been talked about a couple of years ago. And now I know for a fact that they're in the very preliminary stages of casting the film, so we shall have to wait and see what happens. I'm very excited about it."

Although Baker would enjoy the chance to appear in the next, there has been no talk and as he admits, the role would be physically demanding on him now.

"I enjoyed it, I suppose I would if I had the chance, (but) I'll need the robot to stand up in, to be able to stand up."

As far as Mayhew is concerned, the likelihood of the story to support Chewbacca in the upcoming feature, is very bleak. Mayhew reasons that Chewy's age does permit him to be old enough to appear, but there has been no talk. And quite frankly, he is not waiting, because he is very satisfied with his success in the first three movies.

"I doubt it very much, because when you think, when Chewy and Han meet Obi-Wan on Tatooine, it's 50 minutes into the movie, we could be anywhere pre-Star Wars, I don't know. I would like to. I'm old enough to have gone back, it all depends on where the Millennium Falcon was 50 years ago. I would like to do another movie, but I'm not sitting by the phone waiting."

Bullock is sitting on the fence. He hasn't been called yet, but he does see where Boba Fett could still appear in the movies.

"I hope so, but you can never tell. I mean, Boba Fett could certainly be involved in perhaps the clone wars, because I think he was a Mandalorian commander. I could possibly be involved in that, and it would be nice to be called back to do it."

Star Wars Facts

▷ Since the release of Star Wars: The Special Edition, Star Wars has taken over the top spot in box office earnings.

▷ Harrison Ford has already said he wants no part in the next trilogy.

▷ One Hollywood rumor (which is as good as a fact, isn't it?) has Mark Hamil playing Luke's father.

However, like Mayhew, he isn't holding his breath and is content to keep doing what has been keeping him busy, namely, television and stage.

One concern is whether or not LucasFilm will get too caught up in high-tech computer effects. What I mean is, sacrificing story depth for bigger explosions, and that the commercial side of things will get oversaturated. We have seen this happen with other movies, and it has been suggested to be the downfall of Star Trek Generations. Star Trek has so saturated the market with merchandise and remixed this and that, so that now people are simply getting tired. Will this happen with Star Wars?

Our panel of four sees no chance of this happening. Bullock thinks that unlike Star Trek, LucasFilm has a tight control of merchandising and licensing, and that new technology will only heighten the standard that Lucas himself has set.

"I don't think (he) will make the mistake by making it too modern. I think he will use the technology now to make some really nice computer generated stuff. He's a clever enough man not to fall into that trap, it's easy to fall into. You go do this and spend millions on this special effect. It's not worth it." Beside, as Bullock says, we are all waiting for the next Star Wars productions to come; we've been waiting for 13 years.

I hope when they do one two and three, they do it to the same standard as we did it, otherwise, it ain't gonna work.

As always, Baker has a simple explanation.

"You know this movie that came out, Independence Day? It's a good movie, it's good special effects, but it's not better, I don't think, than Star Wars."

Mayhew does see the possibility of over hype or over commercializing, but he also believes Lucas is so far ahead it would never happen.

"I hope when they do one two and three, they do it to the same standard as we did it, otherwise, it ain't gonna work. The money's there, why not get on and do it." As for Lucas, "I don't think George would. He might be under a lot of pressure, but he has got such a stranglehold, when you think he's the only independent producer who has got a studio system all of his own, on private land, and nobody can touch him."

So, how would Mayhew, Bullock, Baker and Davis like us to remember Star Wars and their roles in the trilogy?

Mayhew is very pleased with the precedent Star Wars made in regards to quality in science fiction, and the permanency of his role as Chewbacca.

"This film started a revolution in the film industry. I'm proud of it. You look at any movie or history book, it is one of the top ten movies of the century. You got Gone With The Wind, and one or two of the early classics, and Star Wars comes after it every time. In England, there are very few shows that don't have a Star Wars question on it. I am Chewy, and people respect me for it. I will defend it as long as anybody attacks it. It will go on and on because nothing can touch it. I know what I've done and nobody can take that away, as long as people on this planet enjoy Star Wars, I will always be available."

Baker just likes the fact that the trilogy has lasted this long, and is boggled by the endless possibilities.

"I really couldn't have quite expected that this has gone on for 20 years. If he does three more, it could be another 20 years, couldn't it."

At first appearance you might think that being behind a mask would hide an actor from future success, especially if he continued to be in a mask for three movies without ever seeing the face behind the character.

In Davis's case, he was just starting out in his career and was hidden behind pounds of fur for his role, and for a few movies after that. However, as we have seen, the fact that they were in 'disguise' proved to be very profitable, indeed. It was Davis ability to prove himself in the suit, Baker's sheer endurance in R2D2, the mystery created in Boba Fett for Bullock, and the ability to bring moe hair to life in Chewbacca, via Mayhew, that furthered the careers of these actors.

It was the actors' ability to turn cheap special effects and make-up into a believable world that created and continues to sustain the legend of Star Wars that George Lucas dreamed of 30 years ago.

Forever Knight campaign launched

An Edmonton fan is mounting a letter-writing campaign aimed at demonstrating there's an audience for a possible Forever Knight two-hour movie.

She asks that fans of the series write polite LETTERS (no emails, no faxes, no phone calls) to:

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It's nothing to CRY ABOUT

After inititial misgivings, Cleavant Derricks is happy with the path he followed

By
GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

If he hadn't appeared in the Broadway play Dreamgirls, veteran actor Cleavant Derricks might never have been offered the role of Rembrandt "The Crying Man" Brown in Sliders. Yet Derricks almost decided to turn down the part after his first glance at the script for the pilot episode.

"To be quite frank, I didn't want to do it," Derricks says. "When I read the pilot, I thought the character was a little over-the-top."

Rhythm and blues singer Rembrandt Brown, as he was first depicted, seemed too much larger-than-life and a bit stereotypical to Derricks. It wasn't until he heard from fellow actors that director Andy Tennant had specifically asked for him, that Derricks decided to give the role more consideration.

"He had seen me in Dreamgirls — five times," Derricks explained. "And the character I played in that had the flavor of Rembrandt."

The character of James Thunder Early in the Tony Award-winning musical had a certain lightheartedness that impressed Tennant and made him think immediately of Derricks for the role of Rembrandt Brown when work began on Sliders.

But Derricks still had some doubts so he talked it over with his wife. She suggested that he could always go into the project and voice his opinion about the character. And, if Sliders was

Photo by Michael Lavine/Fo.

picked up as a regular series, he could then always try to rework the character into something that he could be proud of. Derricks agreed and the rest is Sliders history.

"I did like the idea of the show," Derricks said. "I loved it."

The appeal of doing Sliders lay in its basic concept of travelling between parallel worlds. Other science fiction programs have touched on the same theme in individual episodes, but there has never been an entire series based on the idea.

"Some people liken it to so many other science fiction shows," Derricks observed. "I say, 'Yeah, but it's a little bit different, a little bit unique.

"There's so many aspects we haven't touched on yet. It's not going to be boring."

Even though the director wanted him for the part, Derricks still had to go through the audition routine. But in his case, he had to sing for the part. The producers wanted him to read/sing the part of the pilot episode where Rembrandt was driving and practising his version of the Star Spangled Banner — just before he accidently slides through the portal with Quinn Mallory and his associates.

Derricks, who studied vocals at Federal College in Washington D.C., has performed in a number of musical production during his 20-year career as an actor. His roles include Judas in the Broadway production of Jesus Christ Superstar. His singing ability was never in doubt during the audition. The question was could he sing the U.S. national anthem the way a legendary R&B singer making a comeback would do it?

In the United States, singing the national anthem at a baseball game has become a show almost as popular as the game itself.

"I've always wanted to do that," Derricks chuckled.

During his audition and the actual scene itself, he tried to emulate what some of the great singers have done with The Star Spangled Banner in the past.

"It was the best. It was hysterical."

Derricks says he loves working with an ensemble cast and knew at the time that if he could work out the stereotyping of Rembrandt Brown, then Sliders could be something "really good" for him.

He described the relationship between him self and the series' producers and directors regarding his concerns about the character as very positive. He pointed out that they changed the character to address his concerns "without a whole lot of fuss or fight."

Like any original idea on television, Sliders had to break through the barrier of viewer acceptance to convince network executives not to cancel the series.

Acting credits

Sliders is just the latest stop in an acting career that stretches back almost two decades.

Here are some other productions that appear on Cleavant Derricks' resume:

- ▷ Moscow on the Hudson
- ▷ Nashville
- ▷ Hair
- ▷ Fort Apache
- ▷ Rosanne
- ▷ Something Wilder
- ▷ Thea
- ▷ L.A. Law
- ▷ Dreamgirls
- ▷ Jesus Christ Superstar
- ▷ Your Arms Are Too Short to Box With God

Derricks knew that meant sitting on tenterhooks because the series concept was so different from what most ordinary people think of when they hear the term "science fiction."

"There was no doubt in my mind we would have a tough time getting it across."

Derricks noted that during the first season, the Sliders crew didn't get much feedback from Fox executives. The second season saw an 180-degree turnaround with the network brass showing up on the Vancouver set. They watched some of the episodes being put together and told the actors and production crew how popular the show had proven.

"We got more positive feedback from the network. Fox was truly involved," Derricks said, adding that the everybody felt that the network really believed in them and in the Sliders project and he credits viewer response for the turnaround.

"It has made such an impact on us, the networks and producers. It felt so good to hear how people like it. If it weren't for those fans, I don't know if we'd still be here."

A graduate of the Vinette Caroll Workshop (Urban Arts Corps), during his career Derricks

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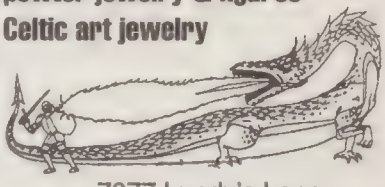

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has worked with and studied from veteran actors like Dabney Coleman. Derricks believes the two main lessons he's learned during his career have helped him with his work on Sliders and other projects.

"Number one would be patience. Taking your time to really develop something rather than just taking it and throwing it out."

Derricks noted that some actors, if their characters aren't getting used much on a series, might ask to have themselves written out so they can look for other roles. Derricks prefers instead, in those kind of situations, to watch his fellow actors at work and see what he can learn from them that he might find useful in the future.

"I observe a lot."

He also prefers to listen to others, explain his feelings about a character or storyline and then offer suggestions. He recognizes that writers, producers and directors have their own way of looking at things.

"I've been in some shows where the actors have gone at writers and producers like cats and dogs. That's ridiculous."

He said every project needs someone who can look at the big picture and is able to work with everyone to make the project succeed.

"That way things get worked out, everybody's in a good mood and it's nice to go to work. Those things they've done, I like a lot."

Derricks has also learned to trust his instincts as an actor where it concerns a role he is performing.

If the script calls for something which seems out of character then he will point it out and offer suggestions on how to fix the things.

"Don't be afraid to try things."

It was this philosophy which led him to forsake his architecture studies (which he liked but didn't love), to take up acting, (which had always fascinated him). As a child, Derricks and his twin brother Clinton Derricks Carroll used to borrow their father's 8-mm camera and shoot footage of themselves acting out stories they had created.

The brothers teamed up on the "Greatfellas" episode with Clinton playing Rembrandt Brown the FBI agent in a world where the Mob controls America.

By the end of his second season of sliding, Derricks was much more comfortable with the character. The Crying Man had evolved beyond the character of the pilot episode.

"He's changed considerably," Derricks observed. "They broadened him. Brown has became more assertive, made more decisions, took stands on particular issues and became, in general, more involved as a member of the Sliders.

"Rembrandt Brown is someone who has never given up his dream. He's also allowed good relationships to pass him by for the sake of that dream. His true heart and soul is that he's a singer and he'll always be a singer."

Derricks observed that Brown has a very strong spiritual side, was probably brought up with a very strong church background and could have become a gospel singer, but may have broken away from his family and past to pursue his own dreams.

Derricks is reluctant to draw too many parallels between his life and that of Rembrandt Brown. His training in architecture was a result of his father's wishes for him until Derricks decided to follow his path and become an actor.

> "I want to stretch Rembrandt. I don't want to typecast the character. I want him to challenge me."

"Rembrandt has learned alot in his travels just as I've learned alot in my travels."

Unlike the other Sliders, especially Mallory, Rembrandt Brown doesn't indulge in a great deal of introspection about being in a world where he might be forced to kill.

Derricks had suggested that Rembrandt shouldn't be joining in a mutual recrimination scene. Derricks believed that Brown is familiar enough with this kind of situation because of some events in his own past.

"That's what I mean about trusting your instincts," Derricks said. "I want to stretch Rembrandt. I don't want to typecast the character. I want him to challenge me. I look for other avenues for this guy because I want him to be more challenging."

Some time in the future, Derricks would like to try his hand at directing live theatre, but only if he can be sure that the people he's involved with are ready to give their best to the project. Of all the forums for acting he's been involved with, he loves theatre the most.

"Most actors will tell you the same thing."

Derricks pointed out that a theatre production moves from start to finish unlike film and television where scenes are often shot out of sequence and then edited together. But the main attraction for him is the immediate response to what is being done on the stage. "You sink or swim in front of 3,000 people. There is such gratification in having that thunderous applause. You can't beat that. Everyone wants to be appreciated for what they do."

A New Kind of Heroes

Photos courtesy MGM

While Western tradition has seven virtues, Chinese tradition offers a somewhat larger number. The Law brothers culled this number down to five — one for each of the warriors.

By
GREGG CHAMBERLAIN

Imagine a world where the magic and mysticism of old China are reality.

Imagine a world where the virtues of Chinese martial arts tradition are alive. Imagine the land of Tao, home of the Warriors of Virtue and the scene of the current fantasy movie epic that came out of Vancouver by way of America and China.

Warrior of Virtue is a modern fairy tale with an Oriental motif. Like any good fairy tale, the origin of the tale begin "Once upon a time. . ."

In the United States, there lives four brothers: Dennis, Ronald, Christopher and Jeremy Law.

The Law brothers are all practising doctors living and working in Denver, Colo. Dennis, the eldest, is a vascular and thoracic surgeon. Ronald is a cardiologist, Christopher is a plastic surgeon and an assistant professor at the University of Colorado Health Services Centre, while Jeremy is an orthopedic surgeon.

But despite their success, the LAw brothers felt that something was missing. The answer lay in their family history and cultural background.

"We though of creating a new genre of hero who was a bit different from the kind of superhero that children have been familiar with," Ronald explained.

Their father was the inspiration. Joseph Law of Hong Kong heads Smile Industries, one of the largest toy manufacturers in Asia.

The Law brothers had observed the marketing success of Star Wars and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles — especially when it came to action figures and other toys. The brothers knew that the right line of toys based on science fiction or fantasy themes could be successful. But they wanted to do even more.

"We wanted to create something that was a little more value-based," Ronald said.

Thus was born the warriors of virtue project and Law Brothers Productions. The $35-million feature film was three years in the making.

Drawing on their own cultural heritage, the Law brothers brainstormed a group of heroic figures who each personified one of the traditional

Chinese virtues. This s not as simple as it sounds. While Western tradition posits the Seven virtues of Faith, Hope, Charity, Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Fortitude, traditional Chinese thought and philosophy encompass a horde of virtues some of which, like Filial Piety, would be hard to conceptualize as living entities. In the end, the Law brothers downsized a bit and came up with five Warriors of Virtue.

The virtues the brothers settled on were Benevolence, Righteousness, Order, Wisdom and Loyalty. Restricting their team of heroes to five also allowed them to make connections between individuals warriors and the five virtues.

"Our heroes, their characters and personalities, are based on these virtues. Their outward appearance is based on the elements," explained Ronald.

Yun, the unwilling warrior, represents the virtue of benevolence. He's linked to the force of water, which is soft and conforming. Yee, righteousness, symbolizes the firm and unyielding strength of metal. Lai, order, personifies the integrity of wood. Chi, heroic wisdom, is fire "the noble element," while loyal Tsun with his forgiving nature is based on earth.

The clothing and armor which the warriors wear also reflect these connections.

Yee wears metallic armor of silver and grey; Chi, the fiery-natured one, is garbed in folds of red and yellow cloth that seem to mimic snapping tongues of flame. In action, even their moments during the heat of battle demonstrate the elemental nature of the Warriors of Virtue. Yun, for example, is always accompanied by the sound of rushing waters.

The movie concerns a troubled teenager named Ryan (Mario Yedidia) who is always harassed at school because of his severe limp. Unable to find acceptance, Jeffers takes refuge in the stories of the martial arts masters of his friend Ming (Dennis Dung), a chef from an Asian restaurant.

Jeffers falls into the world of Tao after accepting a dare to tightrope walk across a pipe above a sewage treatment plant whirlpool. Jeffers falls into the whirlpool and through and interdimensional vortex that deposits him in the Land of Tao, a world populated by humans and Warmbloods (humanoid creatures with animal-like traits).

Photos courtesy MGM

Producers, left to right, Dennis, Ronald, Jeremy and Christopher Law wanted to offer audiences a new type of superhero. After a brainstorming session they hit on the idea of charatcers based on the virtues of Chinese tradition.

> It's a feel-good movie in a sense. You will see the struggle of the teenager as he gains character.
>
> *Ronald Law*
> *Producer, co-creator*

There he meets Elysia (Marley Shelton) and becomes the friend and ally of the Warriors of Virtue and their mentor, Master Chung (Chao-Li Chi). Ryan joins them in their battle to stop the mad plan of the evil warlord, Komodo (Angus MacFadyen), who seeks to gain virtual immortality.

Part of the plot focuses on Ryan who, despite the advice from his family and friends, keeps making the wrong choices in his efforts to become accepted by his peers. His adventures in Tao become a journey of self-discovery.

"It (the movie plot) becomes an issue of character," Ronald Law said. "Something you can't teach overnight."

Before accepting the dare, Ryan receives a manuscript, a book of the right path, which Ming hopes will help the teen. In Tao, the manuscripts turns out to be both the one thing Komodo needs to assure himself of victory and the secret to his defeat. Ryan is the only one who can decipher the book. When Ryan returns home, he realizes the mistake he's made in trying to be accepted by his peers on their terms rather than on his own.

"It's a feel-good movie in a sense," Law said. "You will see the struggle of the teenager as he gains character."

The movie also has a relevant modern-day message. Komodo seeks control of the energy-filled Lifesprings which are the foundation of Tao's ecology.

"Komodo is a very different evil character than what has traditionally been portrayed," Law remarked in reference to other science fiction villains.

Komodo is no one's underling and he has a greater goal beyond simple wanton destruction. Law explained that the subplot parallels environmental concerns in modern society and the way some people deal or don't deal with them depending on their own virtues.

Part of the overall message in Warriors of Virtue, Law said, is that individuals must not only accept responsibility for their own actions and the repercussions of those actions but also learn to project the possible consequences of present and future actions. However, he added, Warriors of Virtue is not meant to be just a Chinese morality play.

"We have made something that's very fun and very action-oriented but, at the heart of it, is very value-based."

Ogden Gavanski, line producer for Milestone Productions which handled the Vancouver portion of the project, agrees.

"We feel this is a very unique project, a very unique look and form of action

that hasn't been seen before on the big screen. It'll be cool enough that children will want to see it."

One of the draws is the Warriors of Virtue themselves. When the Law brothers first brainstormed their new action toy, they wanted to avoid doing a G.I. Joe clone or a Transformers knockoff. In the end, they decided to go with a human/animal hybrid. The next problem was trying to figure out what kind of hybrid.

They considered what type of animal would be most suitable to perform some form of martial arts. In the end, the brothers settled on a kangaroo because the Australian marsupial is capable of bipedal movement and uses its tail to assist in balancing and fighting.

"That particular configuration lends itself to the type of martial arts action we had in mind," Law said.

The next step was to figure out how to make the warriors come to life. Consideration was given to prosthetic makeup and computer-generated imaging, but in the end, the brothers decided in favor of animatronics. They turned the task of bringing the five incarnations of virtue to life over to Alterian Studios of Los Angeles (Darkman, Hocus Pocus, The Addams Family and Speed).

While CGI is capable of some amazing tricks, as demonstrated by movies such as Jurassic Park, the technology was too limited. The science of animatronics, however, was advanced to such a point that it fit the bill.

Law and his brothers are especially pleased with the animatroic heads that Alterian Studios devised to provide each of the warriors with a wide variety of facial expressions.

"It is very difficult to create, in my mind, a heroic face. Each of the heads is driven by 26 motors with radio-controlled devices operated by four or five puppeteers," Law said.

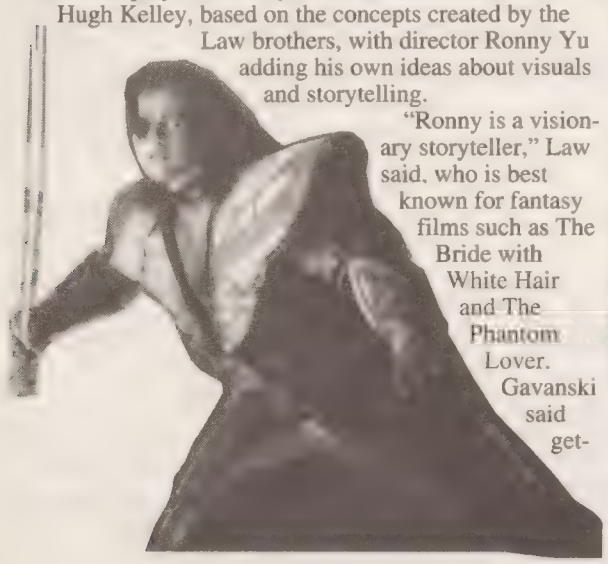
The actual fighting sequences involving the warriors was performed by live actors garbed in what Gavanski termed "animatronic suits" which have resulted in what he described as "a very spectacular and unusual fighting style" based on traditional Chinese martial arts."

The next step before the main production work began on the movie was to field test the concept of the Warriors of Virtue. The Law brothers and/or their representatives attended various marketing and licensing shows with a display of their creation along with clips showing the heroes in action.

"It was overwhelmingly endorsed by people who deal in the public arena," Law said. After that it was time to work out the storyline, choose the right locations and start the cameras rolling.

The screenplay, written by Michael Vickerman and Hugh Kelley, based on the concepts created by the Law brothers, with director Ronny Yu adding his own ideas about visuals and storytelling.

"Ronny is a visionary storyteller," Law said, who is best known for fantasy films such as The Bride with White Hair and The Phantom Lover. Gavanski said get-



Photos courtesy MGM

After falling into the Land of Tao, Jeffers meets Elysia [illegible] in Oliver Stone' [illegible]) and becomes the [illegible] of Master Chung in his [illegible] against the evil [illegible]lo (Angus [illegible]ayden), left.

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ting Yu to work on the project is a "wonderful coup for the Canadian production industry."

Work on the movie included 17 weeks of shooting in Beijing for the Land of Tao scenes and two weeks in Vancouver for the contemporary footage. Production design for the warriors was by Eugenio Zanetti who won a 1995 Oscar for his work on Restoration and Oscar nominations for his set design in films such as Camilla and The Truce.

John Gajdecki (Friday the 13th: The Series, War of the Worlds: The Series and the Outer Limits) worked as visual effects supervisor on the project. The post-production work was divided between Vancouver and Los Angeles to make its release date.

> It's a beautiful film, Beautifully shot and acted. I think it has the potential to be a huge hit
>
> *Ogden Gavinski*
> *Line Producer*

Law Brothers Entertainment plans to offer the movie as a change of pace from the usual summer action movies.

"It is an action picture in every sense, but it is more value-based," Law said.

There are even some parallels that can be drawn between Warriors of Virtues and other film genres such as westerns.

"You look at western movies and you have an unwilling warrior," Law explained, adding theat most action films don't dwell on what makes a person good or drives him toward evil, something that is an integral part of Warriors of Virtue.

As with most film projects, some thought has been given to spinoffs. Law said it's too early to say whether or not there might be a sequel, but a novelization of the movie is being published by the British firm, Titan. United States-based Berkeley will be producing a series of juvenile novels highlighting individual Warriors.

The Law brothers foresee other spin-offs such as interactive games, an animated television series and toys. Law and Gavinski think that Warriors of Virtue could be as successful as Toy Story.

"It's a beautiful film," Gavinski said. "Beautifully shot and acted. I think it has the potential to be a huge hit."

Law stressed, however, that the key to any future success for the movie lies in the characters of the warriors, their friends and allies. "It's not in developing a motion picture. It's in developing characters that will live beyond a film venue."

Monster Madness

Toronto f/x shop making (gruesome) mark in industry

By
ELLEN ASHTON-HAIST

All photos courtesy Form and Dynamics

From the outside, the headquarters of Form and Dynamics doesn't look like much. In fact, it looks like a radiator repair shop, which it is downstairs.

But past the greasy auto parts and up a wide flight of creaking wooden stairs, is a world where the stuff of nightmares are made.

Celluloid nightmares, anyway.

The two-room studio is littered with alien monsters, bodiless heads, mechanical hands and various spare body parts, human and otherwise.

The special makeup effects and animatronics production studio is new on the Toronto FX scene. But the credits of its three partners – David Scott, Matthew DeWilde and Allan Cooke – include such television programs as *Goosebumps, Twilight Zone, Friday the 13th, FX: The Series, My Secret Identity* and, even, *Taking the Falls*., as well as movie projects like *Jacob's Ladder, Proteus, The Killing Machine* and *First Degree*.

Their first team endeavor was *Carver's Gate*.

It's the story of virtual reality run amok in a distant future when environmental disaster has driven mankind into a computer fantasy world. A mad scientist unleashes the virtual reality creations on the world.

For Form and Dynamics that meant a chance for the partners to let their imaginations run wild,

The filming of Carver's Gate in Toronto, provided an opportunity for the company to let its imagination run wide. Above, an undead that plagued Michael Paré.

Matthew DeWilde, right, performs some dental work on an alien head used in Carver's Gate. Below, some of the inner workings for one monster are displayed. In First Degree, the company helped actor Don Franks almost lose his head, below right. On the opposite page, this ghoul was created by David Scott for a short amateur video.

creating all sorts of monsters.

"It's our biggest movie," Scott says. "There are not many Canadian movies with that volume of FX work."

Although Form and Dynamics has existed for just a few months, "we'd all worked together from time to time on various projects," Scott says.

Last fall, when he got the contract for *Carver's Gate,* he recruited Cooke and DeWilde and, once the project was completed, they stayed together.

As a team, they've worked on the TV movie *Golden Girl: The Silken Laumann Story* and *Hidden In America,* a poverty film starring Beau Bridges. For both, the effects were primarily medical.

> With monsters or aliens we can imagine them and who knows the difference?
>
> *David Scott*
> *Co-founder*

For *Golden Girl*, they re-created the injuries suffered by the Olympic rower when her small scull collided with another craft.

While they "of course, prefer the horror and sci-fi stuff" (their studio is papered with posters from *Jurassic Park, Star Wars* and the *Land That Time Forgot*), Scott says it's challenging to create the "textbook medical stuff" right down to the bone, muscle and sinew.

"With monsters or aliens we can imagine them and who knows the difference," Scott explains.

"A major challenge is recreating reality – like surgical instruments – and making them look realistic. Also aging – the audience knows what it should look like and will pick up on a shoddy job."

While they prefer working on films, the trio keeps the bills paid with a steady stream of small jobs: eyeballs, brains, corporate mascots (DeWilde worked on the Toronto Raptors dinosaur) and, of course, TV advertisements.

They also took part in a major entertainment expo in Toronto this fall. A first-time trade show which coincided with the annual Toronto International Film Festival, it's attracting major film and FX companies from around the world. Contacts could mean a glut of work.

But even without such exposure, business is growing, as more and more producers realize the economic benefits of Hollywood North.

One of their current projects is building a partly-decomposed body found in a swamp in the murder mystery *Mother's Day*.

"It's just a matter of getting our name out there," says Scott. "There does seem to be enough work around . . . Genre TV and movies are gaining in popularity."

And Form and Dynamics is getting in on the ground floor.

"Certainly we hope so," says Cooke. "I think the ground floor was actually a few years ago, but the elevator is still near the bottom."

WIZARDS AND LIZARDS

CERAMICS

MARGARET YOUMANS
80 GRAHAM AVENUE, SOUTH
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Stefan
Valent

UNDER THE OCEAN THERE ARE NO STARS

Text by
Robyn Herrington
Art by
Stefan Valent

"Some of our temporary valves . . . "

Garbled noise came across my headset instead of the lastpart of the sentence. I boosted the filters and the volume, and heard something — but the words disappeared under a fit of my own coughing. I wiped my mouth, dropped the soiled tissue in the disposal and tapped the clear wall. "Say again."

Outside the makeshift office, the swimmer shook her head, agitated. At least I think she was agitated. It was hard to tell for sure, as large goggles covered half of her face. She slowly, carefully, repeated her sentence.

"Some of our temporary valves are malfunctioning."

Her words were thick, fuzzy. Water forced over vocal chords produced a sound I couldn't get used to. I made a note and nodded. Apparently, that wasn't enough.

"Mr. Administrator, we've got people drowning down here!"

I laughed. I didn't mean to, but. . .

She pounded on the thick acrylic that separated us. "You think that's funny?"

"No," I said, "it isn't funny. But it sounds absurd . . .people who breathe seawater, drowning."

She folded her arms carefully, making certain not to block either of the permanent water-expelling valves implanted in her torso. "Pardon me if I don't share your. . ."

I shook my head. "Repeat that."

She raised one eyebrow, lifted her middle finger slowly and deliberately. Ah. No words necessary.

"Most of us don't have the permanent implants, Mr. Administrator. Hell, I've been down here nearly a year and I only got mine two weeks ago."

It was true. I could barely see the three parallel lines on either side of her ribcage.

"We lost two people yesterday," she said. "When those cheap valves seize, we can't expel water."

"I'm sorry," I said, "but the waiting list for the permanent implants is long. As long as the sea mills are maintained and generate a profit, then funds will be used to make more permanent implants." "It's hard to maintain equipment as intricate as the sea mills when you can't breathe properly. It's impossible to maintain the sea mills when you're dead. And, if the sea mills stop turning in those ocean currents, then no juice is generated.

No juice, Mr. Administrator. No electricity — and that wouldn't go over well, top-side."

Blue eyes. I could see them through the goggles. Steel blue eyes with unusually wide pupils. It'd be a shame when they finally mutated.

I was just thankful that she'd chosen to wear something. A naked woman — even a RED — would have been too distracting.

"I'm well aware of the value of the workers. You don't need to remind me."

"I think I do." Contempt travelled better through salt water than sound did. "And these suits." She plucked at what was left of the Navy surplus wetsuit she wore. "They're uncomfortable. We have to cut them up to allow us to even move."

"That's all we've been able to find. The Navy's pleased to do its part for the colony."

"Can't you find a swimsuit manufacturer having a going-out-of-business sale? These things," she pulled at the pseudo-skin again, "are constricting, they don't let water through, they don't breathe, and they're ugly. We need something better."

"Noted," I said, "but your priority is the medical team — right?"

"Of course it is," she answered.

"Then I'll see what I can do about getting a med team down here."

"Permanently?"

I almost laughed again. Instead of laughing, I coughed until my throat went dry and I gagged. No one wanted to be under-

water permanently . . .well, not if they had any choice. The REDS wouldn't stay beneath if they didn't have to. After clearing my throat and taking a few shaky breaths from my personal humidifier, I said, "I'll suggest it."

"Suggest it strongly," she said, then paused. "You've got to think of the children."

"Chil. . .?" This time I coughed more from surprise, and I damn near bumped my head on the wall as I started forward. "What do you mean, children? You're not supposed to. . .you all signed a contract saying you wouldn't. . ."

The steel blue eyes blinked. "I don't care what we signed — what are you going to do if someone becomes pregnant, drag them to the surface and let them die? Despite what you might believe, life does go on, even for us. If children are possible then you can assume, sooner or later, there will be children."

Wildmeister steepled his hands, partially obscuring his greying beard. "What have they asked for?"

"Children." I couldn't imagine it.

"It's not an issue yet, and may never become an issue — but it's something to consider when assembling that team." She paused again. "Even aquariums have medical personnel to see to the needs of their exhibits, Mr. Administrator."

Interesting point. "Anything else?" There was always something else with REDS. As I expected, she nodded, her silver hair flowing out in a wild curtain around her. "Under the ocean, there are no stars."

What the heck was that supposed to mean? "You want stars under the ocean?" I asked, coughing again.

"We want to be able to see them. It's too dark at night, too cold."

"Just swim to the surface."

"We can't spend all night on the surface!"

"You wouldn't have to spend all night there," I said. "Just swim up, have a look, swim back down."

"It's not that simple. It's not enough to know they're up there — we want to see them, to share the same stars as you do!

When our eyes change, we can see clearly through water, but not through air, and damn it, we want to feel like we're still part of the planet." She pressed her hands against the thick, clear wall. The webbing between the fingers was delicate and translucent.

"I'll see what I can do."

She gave me the slightest of nods then said, "You know, you could use a med team yourself."

"Thank you for your concern, but I'm fine."

"I said that once."

I chose not to answer.

"And the stars? You won't forget about the stars?"

"I won't forget about the stars."

❑❑❑

"So Davis, how are things at the underwater colony?" Leon Wildmeister wouldn't call them REDS, even though it was a lot easier than saying 'Respiratory/Epidermal Deficiency Syndrome'.

"About the same as always — nothing's ever good enough." I had a headache, and I was cranky. The headache was a side effect of too much over-the-counter cough suppressant, but I'd rather face my boss with a headache than choking on every second sentence.

Wildmeister steepled his hands, partially obscuring his greying beard. "What have they asked for?"

I caught myself tapping the terminal with my pen. I stopped and half-shrugged. "They want a medical team stationed beneath.

They say they're having trouble with some of the temporary valve implants."

He dropped his hands and leaned closer to the screen. "Are they?"

"They claim to be." My throat started to tickle, and I took a quick drink of water.

"This is serious, Davis." Wildmeister looked to the side, tapped on the keys of a small laptop. "Who was their rep?"

I thought a moment. I'd spoken with the woman before. "I think it was Andora Schaeffer."

"You think? You're the company's on-site agent, Davis. You'd better know."

"I'm sure." Another drink of water.

Wildmeister paused. "My wife bought her last book of poetry. Sad stuff," he shook his head, "wild, vivid images.

Terribly lonely poems. You should read her 'Sea of Solitude'.

She went down about a year ago, didn't she?"

I remembered that she went down kicking and screaming louder than most REDS do, and that it made the news. She wanted the right to die on dry land. All I did was nod.

"She's been vocal about worker rights." Wildmeister was thinking out loud. "She's got her finger on the pulse of the colony pretty accurately. I've been toying with the idea of hiring her as a permanent liaison." He tapped a few more keys, stroked his beard and leaned back in this chair. "We can do it."

"Do what, Sir?"

"A medical team. Not a permanent one, but we can certainly give them better than what they have now. It's in the company's best interest to keep the workers in the colony healthy."

He was quiet for a moment, and I wondered how he could call that collection of submerged storage containers a colony. He shook his head and said, "Hell, I'm damn thankful that they've become genetically predisposed to do a job that you couldn't pay me enough to do."

"I suppose. . ."

A sad smile tugged at one side of his face. "None of us want to be in their position. . . even though you might not have much of a choice, soon."

A knot twisted my stomach, more from the effort not to react to those words than to what they implied.

"I've seen enough go through the Change to recognize it, Davis," Wildmeister continued. "Get working on the medical team project for the colony — you have my full authority — then go see a doctor and take a few days off. Who knows? I've heard that some people have been lucky if they catch the Change early enough." He shook his head. "You might provide me with an occasional pain in the ass, Davis, but you do a good job." He paused a moment. "Next item?"

"They've asked for better clothing, Sir. They claim the wetsuits are uncomfortable to wear."

"And hideous as all get-out," he mused. Then he nodded.

"Seems reasonable. Have someone look into it. Anything else?"

I decided, under the circumstances, not to tell him about the stars.

"No, Sir. The REDS just asked for better suits and the medical team."

"I'll expect a full report on this."

Of course. "Yes Sir."

"Oh, and Davis?"

"Yes Sir?"

"Don't call 'em REDS."

❑❑❑

Andora Schaeffer took a quick, shallow breath. She looked out of place in the office, out of place, a little awkward and a little cold. She was shivering. Her long, coarse, silver hair was slicked down on her head, and I realized that I had never seen a RED out of the water.

I smiled slightly and said, "I hope this is comfortable for you."

She held out her leathery hand and caught a couple of drops of water as they fell from the ceiling. "It's strange to be out of the ocean, but when I got your message, I was intrigued.

You're back much sooner than I expected. What's the humidity in here?"

"As close to a hundred percent as we can make it."

"And the temperature?"

"I don't exactly know, but I could find out if you like. I know it's cold."

She swept one hand through the swirling mists. "It certainly is. How long do we have?"

"About ten minutes. Maintaining this kind of specific climate takes a lot of power."

She nodded. "Too bad you couldn't open this place up for the colonists to use. We feel so isolated. We haven't talked to our families since. . ." Her voice trailed off for a moment before she added, "It's not comfortable, but it is tolerable."

My sentiments exactly, though I didn't know if she meant the room or being beneath.

"So," she crossed her legs, "do we get a permanently placed med team?"

"Not a quite a 'team', not permanently placed. . ."

Andora folded her arms carefully. "Great. . ."

". . .But two doctors have agreed to come down once a week, and you have a guarantee of an immediate evacuation in the event of an emergency. They still don't have a perfect water-suit to transport RE. . .colonists in, but they're working on a solution." Andora didn't move, but her valves wheezed and bubbled slightly as she exhaled. "Look," I said, "it's a start."

After a moment, she nodded.

"Yes. It is that. What about our clothes?"

I noticed that her wetsuit had been decorated with a cluster of broken shells stitched on the shoulder, and wondered where she got the needle and thread. "Someone's looking into it. We should have something for you soon."

She nodded again. "Someone and something, eh? Sounds important." She almost smiled. "Now, what about a portal so that we can see the stars?"

I didn't immediately answer.

"You forgot, didn't you?" She moved forward quickly and slapped the desk with her hand. Water splattered everywhere.

"You forgot!"

"I didn't," I said, truthfully enough. "It's just better to approach the company with one or two requests at a time.

Otherwise, you might have been given a choice: medical treatment and better suits, or a window to the sky. This way your request for stars hasn't been refused — it just hasn't been brought up yet."

She sat back in the chair, folding her arms again.

"Convince me."

"Leon Wildmeister, the senior manager, is pleased with the maintenance work that's been done here — and if he stays happy, he'll likely see to it that you get your stars."

After a moment, Andora sighed. "All right, I guess. You know," she waved one finger absently, "this doesn't feel too bad now. If they worked at it, they might be able to make a city up top with a wet enough climate for us to live in."

"They're still working on making dry cities healthy enough for everyone else," I reminded her.

"Ah. Of course," she nodded once. "We're just REDS, aren't we? What is it they're wearing, shirts with that old slogan, 'Better dead than RED'? Out of sight, out of mind. Don't acknowledge the problem, maybe it will go away — that's the general attitude, isn't it? You'd think the human race would learn from past experience, wouldn't you Mr. Administrator?"

"I think we have learnt — are learning. And it's Davis. Davis Cole."

She pulled her chair closer to the desk I sat at, and propped both elbows up. She rested her chin in her hands and gave me a disarming smile. "Well Davis, Davis Cole — here's something for you to think about. Since you've been in this super-saturated air, you haven't coughed once."

❑❑❑

I hate waiting for doctors almost as much as I hate doctors.

I hate the sterile feel of the waiting rooms. Despite ball-pits for the children, game ports and scattered terminals for patients use, despite all the cheery pictures on the wall, the rooms always feel cold and. . . sterile.

I made use of one of the terminals, hoping the time would pass more quickly. I looked at the menu and went to the REDS directory. There were info files, files on treatment, longevity, successful change versus unsuccessful change — a delightful euphemism for 'death' — I didn't know what to read first.

I picked the 'GEN.INFO' file. The audio started. A too-cheerful, digital voice began to recite: "Living with Respiratory/Epidermal Deficiency Syndrome.

An unexpected by-product of increased air pollution, diminishing ozone, and the Greenhouse effect was that normally harmless atmospheric agents changed in the higher levels of radiation to form dangerous new compounds.

We have seen some great achievements in our time.

We have seen the first successful orbiting colony and the first economically viable model of a solar-driven vehicle. A lunar village will likely be a reality by the end of the decade. Yet we have paid a price for all the marvellous advances science and technology has made. . ."

I turned the audio off and opted instead for 'READONLY,' though it was a story I pretty much knew. An unexpected by-product of increased air pollution, diminishing ozone, and the Greenhouse effect was that normally harmless atmospheric agents changed in the higher levels of radiation to form dangerous new compounds. These new compounds began to alter a small percentage of the population.

The respiratory functions of the

affected person changed so that lungs built up water, and could only extract oxygen from an aqueous base. The skin of a RED dried out and continuously sloughed off, to the point where they resembled a snake constantly shedding its skin. The eyes were the last human characteristic to change, forcing the RED to be stuck behind a mask for the first year or so of their new life. Blah, blah, blah.

The syndrome turned some into water-breathers. Their skin altered, became thicker, less likely to lose body heat. Their lungs became dependent on a water-saturated environment. Many died before it was discovered that the introduction of valves meant the difference between living and dying. Then life — albeit altered life — pretty much continued.

In others, the change wasn't so complete. Their lungs still built up fluid, their skin still fell off, but they didn't 'evolve'. Even implanting valves didn't help and death quickly followed. It was a game of genetic roulette. You spin the wheel, you take your chances. Well, my wheel was spinning, and I was waiting for that damnable little ball to land in the right place.

I started to cough. When I was done, I was doubled over in my chair. The people that had been sitting either side of me had quietly vacated their seats and were now doing their collective best not to look at me. The nurse brought me a small cup of water.

Keeping noticeably more than a professional distance, she offered me a tight smile and said, "The doctor should be with you soon."

❑❑❑

Gillian Stevens had been my doctor for years. She sat on the corner of her desk, and I knew her well enough to know when something was wrong.

"So," I said as I dropped into the chair in front of her, "what's the bad news?" Dr. Stevens didn't say a thing. "Isn't that the way it works? You have good news and bad news?"

"I suppose so." She sounded sad. Not good. "You have full-blown Respiratory/Epidermal Deficiency Syndrome." I chewed on my lip and tapped my fingers on the arm on the chair. "Didn't catch it early enough to treat, huh?"

She shook her head. "Davis, why didn't you come in sooner?

You've worked so closely with affected people, you must've recognized the symptoms."

Yeah, I'd been ridiculously tired, but so was everyone who worked for Leon Wildmeister. I'd been suffering from itchy, dry skin, but it was the summer and I was sure it was dermatitis. The shortness of breath I felt — well, I wasn't in the best physical shape. And the body wracking cough was an allergy or something.

Something. No kidding.

"The good news," Dr. Stevens said, "is that it looks like you're genetically predisposed to transform."

"How long do I have before I'll need to go under?" Seemed like the next logical question.

"Probably no more than a month or two, and it's going to get a lot more uncomfortable. You have a personal humidifier?"

I nodded.

"Use it when you feel the need. You won't suffer complications from it." She stood, and held out her hand. "I wish there was more I could do. I'm so sorry Davis."

I took her hand, but I didn't shake it. "Doesn't seem nearly enough, Doc."

"There are a number of good support groups, Davis. I can give you the phone numbers."

I told her not to bother.

❑❑❑

I remembered my neighbours banging on the door, asking if I was all right. I heard them about the same time I put my golf trophy through the glass top of the coffee table. Some time after that, they were back, threatening to call the police. I ignored them again, choosing instead to continue smashing the contents of my kitchen cupboards.

When there was nothing satisfying left to smash, I went to the bathroom. I looked at myself in the mirror, imagining my curly brown hair, my brown eyes, even my freckles which I hated, all gone. I didn't like what I imagined.

There was only one thing to do. I tried to put the clothes hamper through the mirror. It was only when the building superintendent opened the door with her key, and only when I'd nearly knocked her head off as I hurled my cheap copy of 'The Thinker', that I stopped.

"What the hell's going on?" she asked.

"Redecorating," I snapped. "So Rosemary, wanna help?" I directed that to the woman I saw peeking out from behind the Super's back. Rosemary Denado, nosy-neighbour supreme. She ducked quickly out of sight.

The Super looked at the dented walls and torn shades. "I'd say your damage deposit will just about cover all this. You finished redecorating, or do I have to call Building Security and have your sorry butt tossed out on the street?"

I assured her that I'd finished.

"Any more of this, and you'll have to move." I told her I wouldn't be a bother much longer. She closed the door, giving me a look that mothers usually reserve for a kid who'd been warned too many times to stop something.

So what to do? The tears were gone, and so were most of the breakables. The only thing I'd left intact was the computer, though the keyboard was somewhere in the kitchen.

I found it beneath the pieces of a broken stool. I plugged it in and turned it on, thankful when it whirred to life. The image of Andora Schaeffer came to mind, floating defiantly, hands spread wide on the office wall.

Terribly lonely poems — that's what Wildmeister had said. At this time of the night, the lines to the library network were quick to respond, and I found a copy of 'Sea of Solitude'.

After several pages of bleak images that seemed more angry than lonely, I'd decided to quit reading. Of course, I'd decided to quit reading before I'd finished the previous poem, and the poem before that. It was like no poetry I was used to, with scattered rhythms and words that made me feel uncomfortable. But the next page said 'Thanksgiving', and it wasn't like her other poems. This one was dedicated to her family, and a flashing icon in the corner of my screen indicated that audio was available.

Two clicks, and a voice — but not Andora's — filled my room.

"Do you remember to set my place at the table?

That I like to see your faces, our kitchen, the sun setting through the window? Do you remember that I always brought flowers, fresh, fragrant, new? I remember.

Who brings them now? "

I hit the pause button. This was different than the rest.

This was real. Damn her, this was real.

"I played the piano when the meal was done, my voice joining yours as one — our song. Who plays it now? I see you all, and wonder if you still give thanks.

I see you all, remember you, love you and wonder. . .do you remember me?"

I disconnected the link to the library system, and stared at the blinking cursor.

❑❑❑

It had been so long that I had to search for the number.

The connection was good, but all the screen showed was an empty living room. "Hello? Mom?"

"Davis?" Her voice came to me from off-screen, but she appeared quickly, wiping her hands on a dish towel. "Davis, what a surprise!" Her delighted smile faded, replaced by a look of concern.

"You look tired, honey. That taskmaster boss of yours making you work all night?"

"Something like that," I said. "Is Dad home?"

"Oh, your father's down the street. The McGregor's are having trouble with their new satellite dish — he went to see if he could help. You know him — any excuse to tinker with equipment." She stopped. "Should I get him?"

"No. No, that's okay. You can tell him."

"Tell him what?" Her eyes narrowed, then widened. We were both quiet for a time, and I turned away, unable to look in her eyes. Her voice was shaky when she next spoke. "Davis, what's wrong? Are you sick?"

"Yes," I said. "I'm sick. I've been sick for a while, Mom, but. . ."

"Oh Davis, you should've known better."

"Yeah. I know." I sighed. "Tell Dad. . . well, tell him that. . ."

"That, due to circumstances beyond your control, you're. . . moving?" Her words were carefully measured.

"Yes," I said, grateful for her intuition and her intervention. "That I'm moving."

"When?"

"Soon."

"I see." She pulled a hanky from her jeans pocket, and I smiled. Mom's pocket always had a hanky in it, a hanky she used to clean up spills, to scrub at mud smears, to wipe away tears.

"Are you all right? I mean, is there anything we can do?" She started to get up. "I should go and get your father."

"No, Mom. I don't want to. . .I mean I can't, ok?"

"Ok." She wiped her eyes one more time, sat and gave me a crooked smile. "Will we hear from you again?"

"I don't know. Maybe. I sure hope so. I guess I won't be home for the holidays."

"Who knows?" she said. "Maybe one day."

"Maybe."

❑❑❑

My left palm was the only part of my body that felt comfortable. It firmly held a very chilled vodka and tonic. I was taking Wildmeister's advice, and using up some of my sick-time, knowing that soon it would all be gone. . .but then, so would I.

She'd told me that one of the neighbourhood kids turned into a RED, last spring. She told me how everyone reacted, how people whispered that if the child's upbringing had been better, she would have been a stronger person, healthier, more sound — less prone to the evils inflicted on the world.

The city spread out like a sparkling web below my balcony.

It was night, it was still, and the city looked at peace — which really pissed me off. I didn't want it to be at peace. I wanted the usual chaos — the gun-shots, the grumbling of old combustion engines. I wanted the shrieks, the swearing, the cursing . . . but tonight, it was quiet. Damn. It was too easy to think when it was quiet.

My living room was in better shape than it had been two days ago. I'd thrown out my broken furniture, and there were enough dishes in the dishwasher to keep me going. Instead of broken china, the floor was covered with a mass of print-outs and pages I'd run off; calculations, ruminations, lists of things to do. On my new coffee table — a cardboard box I'd scavenged from the apartment storage area — was the contract that all REDS sign before they go beneath.

I had to promise that neither I nor any member of my family would sell my story to a tabloid programme. I had to promise not to sabotage the sea mills. I had to promise to behave and be a good little colonist, to not have children so that the colony resources, limited as they currently were, wouldn't be stretched too far. And one of my family had to co-sign the form. I'd courier it to Mom in the morning.

She'd told me that one of the neighbourhood kids turned into a RED, last spring. She told me how everyone reacted, how people whispered that if the child's upbringing had been better, she would have been a stronger person, healthier, more sound — less prone to the evils inflicted on the world. Good thing I didn't visit my parents that often. No one in their neighbourhood would miss me — or blame them.

Better dead than RED. Hell, I'd even thought about buying one of those t-shirts. Never mind the human race, I still had a lot to learn.

There was barely a break at the horizon where the lights of the city merged almost seamlessly with the stars. It was beautiful to look at, strangely comforting.

But under the ocean, there were no stars.

❑❑❑

"You don't look any better, Davis. The time off didn't do you any good." Leon Wildmeister never looked anything but healthy.

"I got things settled."

"Did you see a doctor? You look like you're in pain."

"I did. And it's not pain, exactly. It's the clothes.

They're irritating."

He pursed his lips and nodded, just once. "Everything taken care of?"

"Best I can hope for."

"Good. Let me know if there's anything I can do."

I assured him I would.

He drummed his fingers on a pile of paper. "Know what this is, Davis?"

"No Sir."

"They're your reports and recommendations, my recommendations on your reports, and the Board's reactions to both." Wildmeister leaned back in the

chair. "You did a very thorough job, Davis — so much for the time off. Frankly, you surprised me. Up until now you've always been the kind of man who stayed with what was safe, erred on the side of caution. But these," he tapped the pile again, "you've made some pretty radical suggestions. . .some costly suggestions, I might add."

I shrugged and tried to not look too concerned at the outcome of this conversation. "Any of 'em any good?"

"You know damn well most of them are better than good. And you also know damn well that most of them won't work without a permanently placed on-site supervisor."

"Yes sir, I do know that."

"A communications room with — how much humidity — nearly one hundred percent?" He shook his head.

"For morale, sir. It will help the colonists keep in contact with their families on land. . ."

She looked at the wide squares of the carbonite net that floated mid-way between the workers habitats and the surface of the ocean, almost invisible. I looked at my watch. "Any time now."

"A recreation facility, also at the same humidity. . . a medical centre? And I like the new contract you propose, though that might just be the hardest thing to get people to agree on. Mighty big plans, Davis. Which brings me," he said, "to your request to set up a permanent field office at the colony."

I was ready with my pitch. "I know the plans are expensive, but with more and more people going to the colony, I think it's an important step for the company to take. I've suggested that the company re-direct one percent of its profits for at least a year. That one percent will hardly be missed by the shareholders, but the good that the money could do the colony . . . be the forerunner, Mr. Wildmeister. Don't let someone else beat you to . . ."

"Granted."

"What?"

"Your new position as site co-manager." He rested back in his chair. "It's something I'd been planning on — being the forerunner that I am." He grinned. "Right now, the colony's workforce is small — but as you pointed out, it's growing. I had thought of making the position available to Ms. Schaeffer, but you're more familiar with our operation. I'll work out your new contract. It'll be in your mailbox by the morning. Your new salary will reflect your new position." He looked directly at the screen. "What the hell will you do with all your money?"

I grinned. "Now that the company's found a swimwear manufacturer willing to support the needs of the colony, I've got plans for a shopping mall, sir."

He grinned back.

"No doubt you do. When do you think you'll be ready to take on your new duties?"

Much nicer than saying 'how long do you have?'

"Not exactly sure. It depends on. . .too damn soon, sir."

He nodded slightly. "I also approve of your suggestion to make Andora Schaeffer the other member of your team. Good choice."

"Logical choice," I said.

"Now, are you going to tell her, or would you like me to?"

I said I'd tell her. I thanked him for his time and for backing my proposals. He didn't promise they'd all go through exactly as outlined, but he saw their potential. "One more thing before you go, Davis." He lifted one thin sheet of paper in the air. "What's this about stars?"

❑❑❑

"It's not as bad as I thought it would be," I said. My brown hair had all but completely fallen out. A short stubble of thick silver had taken its place. The newly implanted valves still itched, and I had to remind myself not to scratch. I thought it would be hard to rely on them, but breathing with them had become as comfortable as I remembered breathing could be.

Learning to move in an environment where gravity had less of a hold was the hardest, the strangest and the most exhilarating. I actually looked forward to the change being complete so I could see my new world with new eyes, and breathe without the blasted implants.

Andora smiled. I saw more of her smiles as the days went by. "You've made good changes, Davis. Everyone appreciates them. I especially appreciate not looking like a Navy Seal."

Her eyes had finally transformed to the beautiful silver-grey of the 'older' colonists.

"Trust me. You never looked like an Navy SEAL."

I smiled at her, then added, "I'm surprised we got as much as we did. I tried to get everything we talked about — even thought up a few goodies myself. I mean, now that I'm a resident down here, I want to make sure I'm comfortable."

"So, all this was for purely selfish reasons?" She was still smiling.

"Of course." I grinned.

She looked at the wide squares of the carbonite net that floated mid-way between the workers habitats and the surface of the ocean, almost invisible. I looked at my watch. "Any time now."

I felt a rush of water on my arm as she expelled the water from her lungs, and heard her say "Davis! Oh Davis, it's beautiful."

Randomly placed fibre optic nodes blinked into life all over the strands of the carbonite net.

"So tell me, Ms. Schaeffer . . .how are those stars?"

"Not perfect, Mr. Cole. But good. Pretty damn good."

"And they'll do until we can work out a more permanent solution, until we can get you your window to the sky?"

She didn't look away from them. "They'll do just fine. You know, this means I'll have to change the title of my new anthology."

"Why?"

"Well . . . 'Under the ocean, there are no stars' — it doesn't feel right now." She slipped her arm through mine.

"Thank you, Mr. Cole."

"Ms. Schaeffer, you're more than welcome."

472

Text by
D.K. LATTA

Pink and Purple

swirls coalesced about him, bubbling, seething, then dissipating, reforming instantly in different shapes, different shades. He likened it to what it might be like to watch stormy skies on an alien world. His arms stretched out at his sides with that eerie, disconnected sensation he knew he would never truly get used to.

"Are you there?" he asked, lips moving, again, as if belonging to someone else.

Colours coiled, then shot around him again. Like spirits. Some colours, though, held, becoming thicker, harder. Definite. Something sprouted from the chaos. First long, muscled arms, then a round head perched atop a bull neck. Two horns grew above eyes that glowed darkly red.

"Hello, Doctor Gunnarsson," it growled, the words issuing from a fanged mouth. "How are you this morning?"

Thorval Gunnarsson started drifting so he concentrated, steadying himself. "I'm fine. But it isn't morning, it's just past lunch — almost one-thirty."

"Oh," said the beast. "You're late, then. Did you," it seemed to consider for a moment, "did you have traffic problems, Doctor Gunnarsson?"

"I was at a funeral." Thorval hesitated, then added, "My mother died."

"Our condolences. Was it sudden?" asked the beast, its graven features looking downcast, even sympathetic.

"Her heart had been giving her trouble for a long time."

"Does our asking about it bother you? We don't have to."

Out of the corner of his eye he saw a green Big-Wheel he had owned once as a kid. The beast did not notice and it was gone in a moment. Thorval started to speak, then stopped. He smiled slightly. "I would be happy to answer any questions about burial rituals, 472."

"Good." The beast gave a curt nod, like a child. "You were with her when she died?"

"She died in her sleep. Alone." Unwillingly, he flipped end over end.

"That is the saddest thing, we think. Dying alone."

Thorval coughed. "I think you would be more interested in the generalities. The wake for example."

The beast waited politely.

"That's a gathering of friends and relatives to remember the deceased. There's food and such. We had bagels. I don't suppose you know what a bagel is, do you, 472?" Thorval concentrated and the colours congealed to form a perfect bagel, cream cheese as its crown.

"No," it growled, "we've never had the pleasure." The beast reached out with taloned fingers but the bagel curled effortlessly about its hand, intangible colours once more. It frowned and stared at its empty palm. "Doctor?" it said suddenly, looking up. "Why do you call us '472'?"

"Because you're my four hundredth and seventy-second case."

"Can we not," the voice paused, as though timid to broach the topic, "can we not have a name? Yes, I think we would like a name."

"No," Thorval said. "There'd be no point."

"Oh," said the beast.

"Does that upset you?" he asked, a trifle eagerly. The beast said nothing. "Perhaps we can explore that a

little?"

"Of course, Doctor."

And he began speaking — gently, kindly, seeking out that one sign of weakness, of frailty. The keystone.

In time, Thorval grew tired and brought the session to an end. He was always the one who did. The beast never tired.

He reached up to his naked face, touched something that was not there, and lifted the helmet. Immediately he was in his office, floating in the suspension tank in the room-temperature gell. He blinked twice and spat to clear his mouth of the awful cotton taste; his head was starting to ache, too, just in back of his eyes — as usual. Dropping the helmet on its stainless steel table and dragging himself out of the tank, he swiped uselessly at the frictionless gell coating his yellow and green body-suit.

He glanced through the double-paned window at the frail figure stretched out on starched bed-sheets in the next room. Virgil Hart slumbered restlessly, oblivious to everything around him; unaware of the fresh flowers brought daily by his wife, Marion, or the helium-filled mylar balloon sparkling under the fluorescent tubes, the words "Get Well Soon" scrawled on one side.

The balloon had been from his five-year-old daughter, too young to really understand why her daddy was locked in a white room, away from her. The unconscious man was not even aware of the nurse in the baggy body suit, face concealed behind a faceplate and hood, taking his pulse. The opaque faceplate looked up, then a hand lifted, acknowledging Thorval.

He waved back, unsure who it was.

But all of it, the room, the nurse, the get well wishes, were merely stalling tactics, things to keep Virgil Hart going for another hour, another day, another week. Keep him going until Thorval Gunnarsson, M.D., could perform a miracle.

For it was there, in that room, beyond his grasp, beyond even his sight, that Thorval's opponent resided. The beast.

Inside that isolated body, ravaging its way through the patient's system, was the virus — number 472. And his skill alone would decide whether Virgil Hart would survive.

❑❑❑

Thorval stared through the monorail window at the evening skyline over Toronto. His ghostly reflection stared back at him. It was a twenty-minute ride to work every morning and a twenty-minute ride home at night. Plenty of time to reflect on the day's events. Too much time.

"Thor? Thor Gunnarsson?"

Startled, he looked up past a steel-grey beard at intense eyes peering at him from beneath a turban. Thorval stood up and shook the man's hand. "Uh, Dr. Sandhu, isn't it?"

"Sorry to hear about your mother," Sandhu said, his handshake like a lumberjack's. "Best damn cutter I've ever worked with. Of course, I guess her — our — kind of medicine is becoming like the dinosaurs. Your field is the future, eh?" He shrugged, a bittersweet smile twitching his lips. "Cleaner that way, I guess."

"Yes," Thorval muttered, "cleaner."

❑❑❑

"Yes," growled the beast. "We think we can see the value of Mr. Hart."

Thorval nodded as he drifted. "A true community leader whose life has touched so many others."

Faces emerged from the chaos, then vanished again. Faces he had memorized from Hart's dossier — friends, co-workers. For the first time in days — in fact, since he had gone to work on 472 — he began to relax. Things were starting to run a bit more smoothly. It would not be long now. "Whereas you, well, you don't really touch anyone but yourself."

He glanced through the double-paned window at the frail figure stretched out on starched bed-sheets in the next room. Virgil Hart slumbered restlessly, oblivious to everything around him; unaware of the fresh flowers brought daily by his wife, Marion, or the helium-filled mylar balloon sparkling under the fluorescent tubes, the words "Get Well Soon" scrawled on one side.

"And Mr. Hart."

Thorval narrowed his eyes, forcing himself not to subconsciously materialize an image of Hart's fever-wracked body. "True. But you recognize the insignificance of your existence, don't you? After all is said and done, when Mr. Hart dies from your invasion, you die too. But whereas Mr. Hart will be remembered by friends and family, his influence extending well beyond his own existence, your passing will be unregistered by anyone. You'll be forgotten the moment you cease to exist."

"But you'll remember us, won't you, Doctor Gunnarsson? You'll keep us in your mind, playing over our conversations, again and again."

Thorval shook his head. "No. I'll forget you, too."

"You won't have a wake for us? Like you did your mother? A wake of one?"

Dumbly, Thorval stared.

"Doctor?"

"No," he said suddenly. "Wakes are for people."

❑❑❑

His hand shook, just slightly, as he poured himself a shot of scotch, the bottle's neck clinking against the glass' lip. Once. Twice. He hoped she had not noticed or, barring that, would let it pass if she had.

"Is something bothering you, Thor?"

He settled the bottle back amongst its comrades and pressed the furrowed glass against his forehead, the beads of condensation attaching themselves to his skin, cooling the fire in his brain. He took a sip of his drink.

Louise Seremba closed her magazine, putting it carefully beside her on the couch, then stared across the room at the man seated slouch-shouldered before the bar.

"Your mother . . .?"

"Work," he said tightly.

"Oh. Still having trouble with number, um, four, um, sixty-three or —"

"Four . . . Seven . . . Two," he said, emphasizing each numeral like a carpenter driving in a nail.

"How many times do I have to. . .?" He stopped, visibly

calming himself. "Sorry. It's been a long day and I've got a headache. 472 will come along, they always do," he assured her. "Always." Unwillingly, his eyes roamed across the wall's artificial cherry wood paneling to where the framed magazine covers perched like fine art in a gallery. Untouchable behind glass. His face on the cover of Maclean's, Newsweek, Saturday Night, L'actualite. Like bizarre mirrors, reflecting brief moments in time, they threw his image back at him.

His image and his unparalleled success.

Thorval Gunnarsson raised his glass ironically to his portraits which stared back at him, smiling, but with dead eyes, like marbles. "Congrats." A hand on his shoulder almost sent his glass crashing to the floor.

"God, you're jumpy."

Thorval looked up into Louise's ebon features.

"I told you, it's been a long day."

Her supple dark fingers began working into his trapezius. "Maybe you should take some time off. I know it's been rough for you since your mother's death. I could get away from the lab for a few days, maybe a week. We could rent a cabin up north. Or go down to the States." She leaned forward and brushed her lips against his ear. "I hear the sea bubbles off Florida are pretty nice . . . with reasonable rates."

"I have to finish with 472 first."

"Sure, but after . . ."

"I have to *finish* 472."

❑❑❑

"In our last session," said the beast, "we asked you if you would remember us after . . ."

"And I said, no," Thorval interrupted. "And I really think it would be much more productive to discuss your feelings about-"

"Not at all?"

"No. I'll move on to other projects with nary a backward glance."

"Other projects? Like 473? Is that what your next, uh, project will be called, Doctor?"

"Actually, I'm thinking of taking a vacation."

There was a moment of silence as the two drifted side-by-side. Then the beast asked, "What is a vacation?"

He stared at the horned thing. "A vacation? It's just something people do, something we need. When you work for a long time, work at the same thing over and over, you need to stop, to get away for a while."

"Get away from work?"

"Yes."

"Get away from me?"

Thorval began sinking under the beast. "Yes."

"And what do you do on these, uh, vacations?"

"Whatever I want. A vacation is freedom. I suppose I'll get out of Toronto — away from the smog, the noise." Thorval smiled, sensing an opportunity. "Go to the country." About them the colours shaped themselves into verdant trees and tall grass; a bird whistled overhead. "Walk on beaches, bask in the sun." They stood on a smoldering hot beach, waves lapping pleasantly at the sand. Subconsciously, Thorval had dressed himself in sandals and a bathing suit. He grinned as he realized even the beast was wearing gaudy Bermuda shorts. "Things like that."

"Walk on beaches? Bask in the sun? But we cannot do that, can we, Doctor Gunnarsson?"

"No." The vista vanished and the cold, impersonal colours rushed in to fill the void.

"We have no legs to walk with, no skin the sun may touch."

Was that regret he was detecting? Weakness? "That's right. You'll never have anything like that, not in your brief, confined, existence. Your monotonous existence."

"Unlike Mr. Hart?"

The doctor nodded vigorously as he circled the beast. "Precisely. Unlike Mr. Hart who has a whole range of experiences open to him, a range of sensations, of stimuli. He has so much to live for, and you have nothing."

"We have ourselves."

"Is that enough? Without art or intellect or growth? You live a life without worth."

"But . . ." the beast seemed to stumble, to have trouble forming its next question. The wall was coming down. "But how does one define a worthy existence? How do you, Doctor Gunnarsson?"

"You know how I define worth. The question is: how do you?"

"We?" it asked. "How do we define worth? We . . . do not . . .know. We cannot be as sure as you, as definite. You have, after all, explained to us "worth."

How much more worthy is the entire human race and, therefore, by extension,

Thorval Gunnarsson raised his glass ironically to his portraits which stared back at him, smiling, but with dead eyes, like marbles. "Congrats." A hand on his shoulder almost sent his glass crashing to the floor.

Mr. Hart, than are we. You have libraries . . ." — books drifted by — "and operas . . ." — a fat woman with a spear waved at them before returning to nonexistence — "and schools. . ."

"Yes, yes."

". . . and armies and bombs and poverty and hunger."

Vile images flashed by, images of death, of dying, of despair. Thorval shuddered, unsure whether the beast was creating them, or he was subconsciously.

"And we have created nothing, built nothing." The chaos returned, mercifully. The vacuum. "Therefore, we are inferior. But, Doctor Gunnarsson, could that not also be used to indicate that we are superior — purer?"

❑❑❑

Thorval hesitated before the black plaque that read, "Beatrice Parker, Chief of Nano-Cybernetics," then shoved the door in with such force that it hit the wall behind. A plaster chip spiraled through the air.

"Parker," he growled, "I want to talk to you."

The plump, blonde woman stared at him from behind horn-rimmed oculcomps, then calmly took her hand from her mouse and pushed aside her monitor screen. "You'll pay for the wall, of course."

Thorval leaned over the desk. "Dammit, what have you done?"

"Really, Gunnarsson, you'll have to be more lucid. I have no idea what you're talking about. And since I have a meeting in," she glanced at her watch, "six minutes, I hope you will be succinct."

"Something's gone wrong with the nano-circuit you injected into Virgil Hart."

"Wrong?" She pursed her lips.

"Viruses don't last this long against me. But 472's sense of self-worth is too well defined. Don't you see? The nano-circuit giving it its intellectual piggy-back must be malfunctioning. Either that or someone in your department expanded the circuit's reasoning potential and it's passing that along to 472."

She shook her head, watching him through hooded eyes. "The nano-bots forming the circuit are the same as always. No improvements have been ordered — or even recommended. All you're really telling me is that your perfect success rate, the one that makes you a media darling and the king of the lecture circuit, is in danger. Too bad," she said simply. "But we all screw up. Even me. So why not you? No one will hold it against you."

"I haven't screwed up. It's 472. Its will is stronger than any I've encountered."

"Are you feeling all right, Gunnarsson?"

He stepped back. "What?"

"A virus has almost no mass, no intelligence, no anything. The nano-circuit allows it just enough of a potential for self awareness for you to impress upon it its own insignificance, for you to talk it to death. No more. You've been working too hard. The Voice of Death is tired, that's all."

Thorval narrowed his eyes. "The 'Voice of' what?"

"That's what they call you around here, didn't you know that? Don't look so shocked, it's a compliment. But the fact remains that you've been working too hard — I blame administration for letting you. Yours is such a new procedure that no one's really sure of the stress-effect on the doctor. You should have taken time off after your mother's death."

"Are you calling me a liar?"

"No. But I do think you're attributing characteristics unnecessarily." For a brief instant, a touch of compassion brushed Parker's voice. "I think you should get someone else to take over this case for you. Ito, perhaps. He could be flown in from Tokyo. Be here in twenty-four hours."

Thorval stared at the desktop. "Hart could be dead by then."

"Other doctors have lost patients before you and will continue to do so after. I think it is unwise for you to continue."

"I — I — no! No. I have to finish with 472. I have to."

Parker shrugged and rose from her chair. "The choice is yours, Gunnarsson. But your time is up."

❑❑❑

"It was suggested I get someone else to take over for me. To finish this — this matter."

"And did you agree?" asked the beast, squatting in mid-air, powerful arms wrapped about its knees, head cocked.

"No." Thorval allowed himself to twist about, unchecked. "No, I figured I owed you that much. To see it through."

"Thank you," it said. "Can we win? Do we have that potential?"

"No," he sighed, "you can only delay."

The full moon sprayed a washed-out light across the bedroom wall, bleaching the surface and forming distorted shadows from the most innocuous of objects. He lay staring at the shadows, unable to sleep despite the hour, comforted only a little by the warmth of Louise's body. She brushed fingers gently through his hair.

The beast was silent for a while. Thorval crossed his arms, waiting for the next retort, the next round. At last, it spoke. "Tell us, Doctor Gunnarsson — can we call you Thorval?"

Quietly, he said, "No."

"Why not?"

"I said no."

Silence again. "Tell us, Doctor Gunnarsson, do we have a soul?"

Thorval turned to stare at the beast, his mouth slightly agape.

"You maintain we have little intellect, but do we have a soul?"

"Of course not."

"Then, I think, we are scared, Doctor Gunnarsson."

"Scared? Of what?"

"Death."

Something black flickered amidsts the purple and pinks. Thorval refused to acknowledge it.

"Death?" he asked dubiously.

"Ending. Ceasing to be. Not even a memory. You said yourself that you would not remember us after we are dead. And if not you, our only true companion, then who? No one." It straightened, its clawed toes becoming momentarily transparent, then solid again. "Is death cold?"

"Cold? Of course not. Death isn't anything, not hot or cold. Death is just death."

"Then life, even an insignificant life like ours, is a something." The beast was quiet for a moment.

"Doctor Gunnarsson, we want to hold onto our something — our paltry something. We do not want to merge with death. We do not want to become nothing. Please, Doctor Gunnarsson."

"I," he stopped, "I can't help you." He wrenched off the helmet.

❑❑❑

The full moon sprayed a washed-out light across the bedroom wall, bleaching the surface and forming distorted shadows from the most innocuous of objects. He lay staring at the shadows, unable to sleep despite the hour, comforted only a little by the warmth of Louise's body. She brushed fingers gently through his hair.

"Thought anymore about getting away?" she asked quietly.

"I don't know. I'll just have to see. 472 is doubting, it's almost time." He shook his head.

"God, I can almost hear that pleading voice in my ears, like he's right beside me."

Her hand fell away.

"Do you think about anything but that damn virus?"

"I'm a doctor, I have a patient to cure," he responded, not rising to match her peevishness. Thorval listened for a time to the gentle patter of rain splattering across the clear plastic window, then he sighed. "I don't know, maybe Parker's right — about working too hard. Four hundred and seventy-one is an awful lot. It wears. All that talking, for only one end." He stopped. "It's not

the intelligence that's the real problem, though, it's the feelings, the emotions. I mean, sure I can easily out-think 472, but that doesn't . . ."

"Feelings?" Louise laughed. "You *have* been working too hard. You're talking through a virtual reality unit that's talking to a microscopic computer that's talking to a . . . a bug. Don't give me 'feelings'. Everything about 427 . . ."

"472."

". . . 472 . . . its ideas, its words, its so-called feelings — come to it through the nano-circuit. It didn't have them before, it won't have them if you order the nano-bots to shut down."

The bed springs creaked as Thorval sat up. "You can't know that. None of us can really know that for sure."

"Jeezus, Thor, come back to bed."

He began dragging on clothes. "None of you understand a Goddamned thing!"

She sat up, scowling. "Where are you going?"

"Out!" The door slammed behind him.

"That's crazy," she muttered at the closed door. "It's raining."

❑❑❑

"You are upset, Thorval. Is there any way we can help?" inquired the burly beast gently.

"No." Thorval dragged fingers through his hair, staring down at his feet, at the way they drifted apart, independent of each other, almost independent of him. Then he focused past them, at the burning red eyes, and said, "Give up. That would help. Stop resisting Hart's antibodies."

"You would ask that of us?" it said sadly.

"You have made us aware of our loneliness, Thorval Gunnarsson, of our isolation. But it is that loneliness that so terrifies us. In death there are no friends to wait for us, no ancestors to greet us. Death is the ultimate loneliness. Do not make us alone, Thorval. Do not kill us."

"I'm not," he insisted, rolling away, not wanting to look at those glowing eyes.

"I won't. You have to do it yourself."

"And that absolves you?"

"I have nothing to be absolved of!" he yelled.

"Not even murder?"

"Murder?"

"Four hundred and seventy one of them."

"It's not murder. They were just — just viruses. You're a virus. Nothing. Insignificant. Virgil Hart has everything to live for, you have no right to take that away from him. None."

"But you have the right to take our life away from us? Why? Because we do not love, do not hate? Because we do not know joy or sorrow, loyalty, friendship?"

"Yes, yes, a thousand times, yes."

"Are you sure?"

Thorval stopped, his hands clutching at his head, his heart thundering in his chest, pounding like a ceremonial drum. "What," he whispered, "what do you want from me?"

After a moment, and in little more than a whisper, it said, "A vacation, Thorval."

"What?"

"We want to walk on beaches and taste bagels. We want to experience life. You have made us aware of how little we have, and how much there truly is, and we are sad. We are alone."

Slowly, Thorval Gunnarsson turned his sights to stare into the beast's eyes. "You will. It's inevitable."

"Then we do not want to die alone, without the companionship of a friend,

"Gi-give up," he croaked through numb lips. "Please? When Hart dies, you die. Why drag it out? Why drag him with you?"

"We do not want to die, Thorval."

Slowly, Thorval Gunnarsson turned his sights to stare into the beast's eyes. "You will. It's inevitable."

"Then we do not want to die alone, without the companionship of a friend," it said haltingly. "When we pass we will not be mourned, we will not be remembered. Our experiences, limited as they are, will cease to have relevance. We shall be," it stopped, "erased."

And then something passed over Thorval, something firmed his spine and steadied his nerves. He straightened and stared at his opponent, his companion. It was all so simple somehow. "What do you want?"

"We do not want to die alone, friend Thorval."

❑❑❑

"I got here as soo — Jeezus." Parker stopped in the centre of Thorval Gunnarsson's office and stared through the glass beyond the suspension tank. Thorval was curled in a ball at the foot of Virgil Hart's bed, shaking with fever. "How long has he been there?"

A heavy-set technician shouldered past a couple of interns. "I found him there about ten minutes ago. But since no one's seen him since this morning, it's a good bet he's been there for hours."

"Jeezus," Parker repeated, touching her fingertips to the glass. "Why? He's not a hands-on practitioner. There's no reason he should have been in there at all. He's deliberately infected himself."

Turning slowly to the technician, she asked, "What were you doing here anyway?"

He shrugged. "I was finally getting around to replacing the circuits in the tank."

"What?"

"Dr. Gunnarsson's suspension tank has been off-line for a good week now. I don't know if anyone got the memo, though. It's been crazy down in the shop the last few . . ."

"What are you talking about? He's been treating Mr. Hart all week."

The technician frowned. "Not with that tank. If Dr. Gunnarsson was submerging himself in there, he wasn't talking to anyone but himself."

Super Job

Toronto's Stuart Immonen takes the Man of Steel to new heights and the challenges of married life

By
JAMES ARMSTRONG

To most readers, comic artist Stuart Immonen seemed to just drop out of the sky when his work first appeared on the pages of Adventures of Superman.

But, like many up-and-coming stars in the comic book industry, Immonen has paid his dues.

Born in Welland, Ont., a young Stuart Immonen bounced from his birthplace to Feversham, B.C., then to Sarnia, Ont., before finally landing in Toronto to stay. Now with a young family, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from York University, Immonen has made huge leaps in his comic book career since his start in 1986.

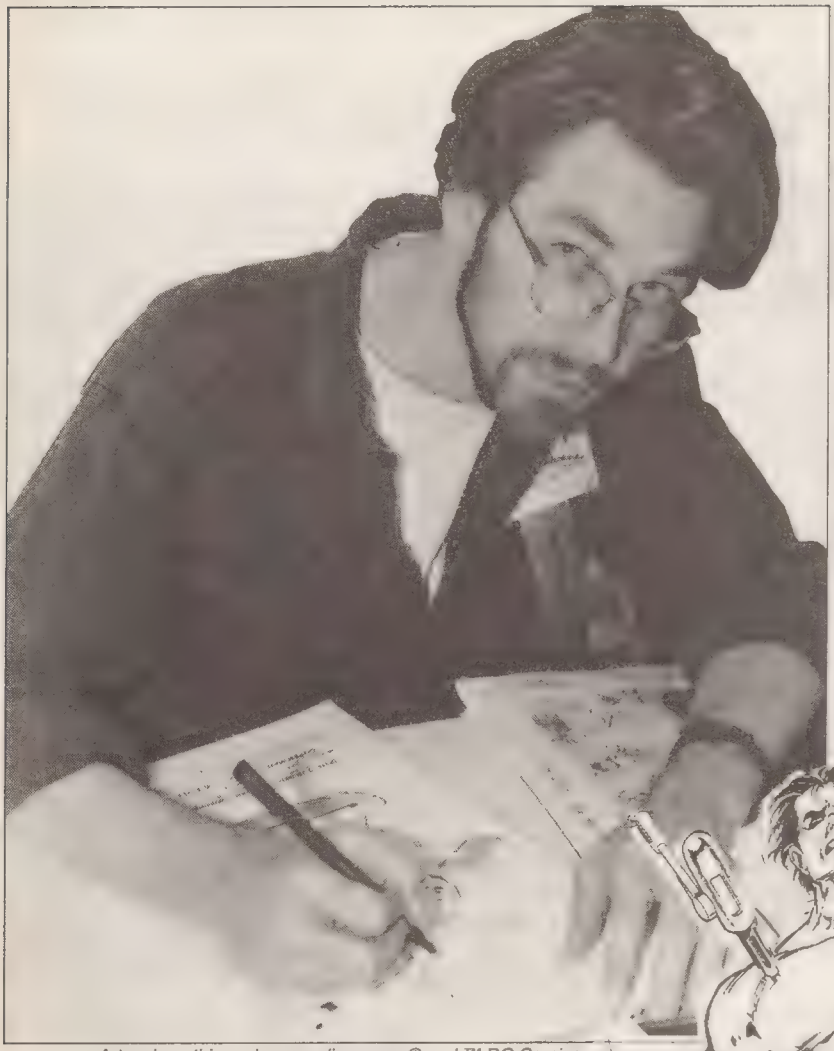
"One of the first things that I got paid for was a project for Innovation Comics company," Immonen recalls. "They did a comic-book version of the Lawnmower Man. After that they gave me other work on Hero Alliance, but, I wasn't really happy with what I was doing then."

Breaking into the industry is usually the hardest step for any artist, but, for Immonen breaking in did not equal happiness.

"I think things went from bad to worse, when I started excepting work from Revolutionary Comics. I'm a little embarrassed to say that I once drew bands like Antrax, and Guns'n'Roses, for their Rock'n'Roll comics line. Not only were the books bad, but, the pay was bad too. I shouldn't even be mentioning that, but if you want to know how I started, that's the truth."

Immonen leaves out no details of his struggle to the top.

"I was determined to do something that I wanted to do, so my girlfriend at the time, who I've made my wife, convinced me to try and publish my own comic book. So with little money, and poor distribution we put together a limited mini-series entitled Playground under



Artwork on this and proceeding page © and ™ DC Comics
Photo by JEL

After publishing his own set of titles with smaller presses, Stuart Immonen made the leap to D.C. Comics and the challenges of working on one the best-known heroes in the world.

our own publishing company, One Horse Leadworks.

"I wouldn't call it a success, but, after the issues came out, we were approached by Caliber Press who wanted to do a reprint of the story. In the meantime, we published another mini-series with our own company entitled, Headcheese and the offer by Caliber had sweetened into original stories instead of the reprints."

After a fall out with Caliber Press, Immonen stowed his ideas of publishing his own work, and began work on DC's, Legion of Superheroes with respected Canadian inker, Ron Boyd.

"Ron also went to York, but, we didn't really know each other until we started work on Headcheese. We worked together on Legion of Superheroes for a number of issues, but, I left to start on a new mini-series for DC, called The Creeper. But, that series never happened because the artist on Adventures of Superman had left, and that's when they asked me to fill in."

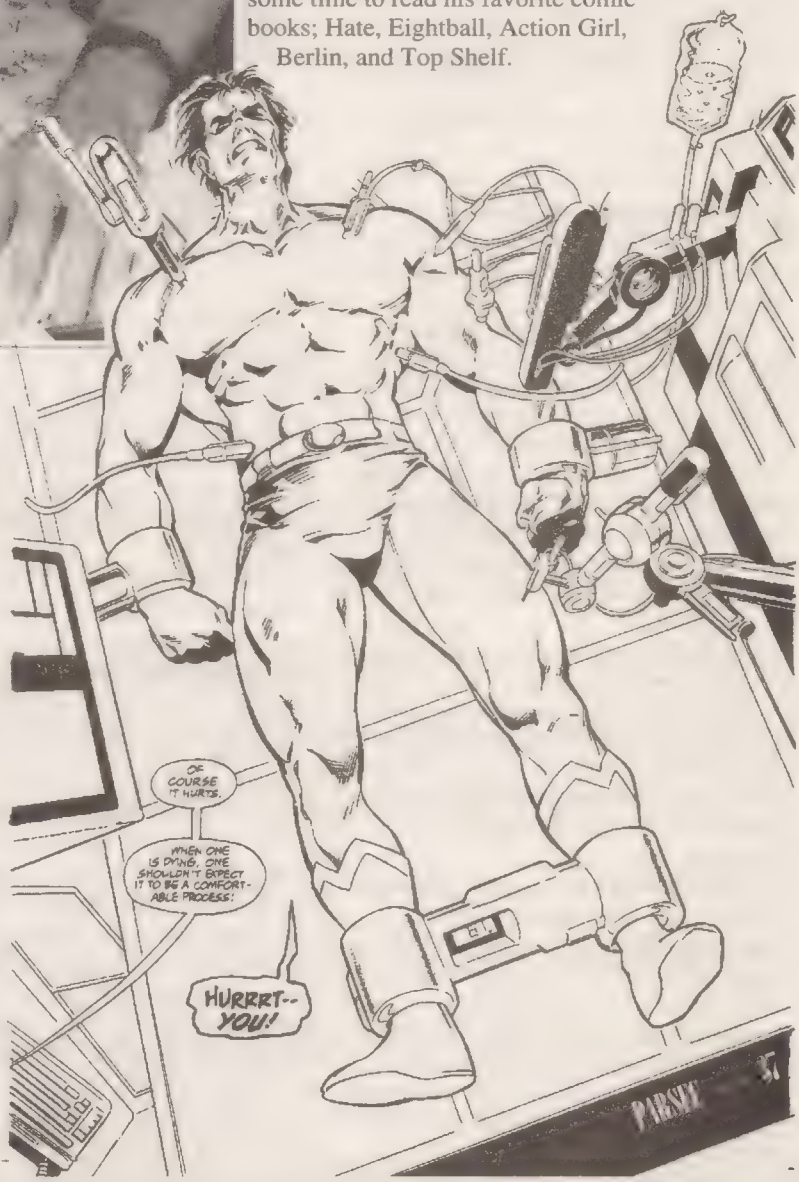
Since Immonen started on Superman he claims that his life has not changed a lot, but the steady work has definitely put pressure on him to make his deadlines.

"I used to have more time to myself, but with The Final Night story, and the wedding of Lois and Clark, I've been spending more time working than ever before. I do like it, though, and I've signed another one year contract with DC."

Immonen is signed to work on The Adventures of Superman until issue 550 which should be on sale in August. Then he moves over to fellow Superman title, Action Comics, as both writer and artist. At about the same time, his four-part mini-series Inferno will also be hitting newsstands.

"It's exciting to try my hand at writing for a change," he said. "I'm pleased to have a little more control than I have when I'm just a penciller."

In his spare time Immonen enjoys spending time with his young son, Connor, and still finds some time to read his favorite comic books; Hate, Eightball, Action Girl, Berlin, and Top Shelf.



Playing Detective in a Strange Future

By
Greg Vaillancourt

There is a trend in computer gaming today that involves attempting to make the gaming experience more real, to "suspend disbelief." What all this really means is that as the technology increases, more powerful things can be done to enhance the game in many respects. Humming alongside all of this technology are the people who use it to create games.

The days of software being made by programmers, animators, a couple of analysts and play testers are long over. You see, ever since the '80s there has been an ever increasing amount of influence from Hollywood in the production of games. When Hollywood saw what computers could do for their films, they saw dollar signs.

Some of the no-so-prim' Hollywood actors even got involved in the first few games to include full motion video. In English that means little pieces of a movie acted out specifically for the game to be played to advance the plot and as a kind of eye candy for the gamer.

One of the earliest gaming companies to hop on the Hollywood bandwagon was Access, makers of the hugely successful series of golf software — Links.

This merger of Hollywood and gaming was not easily accepted by the majority of the gaming companies. Some (mostly the small independent publishers) didn't support this move toward "Hollywood gaming," believing that it would be a short-lived trend.

Well, as the saying goes "if you can't beat'em, join'em."

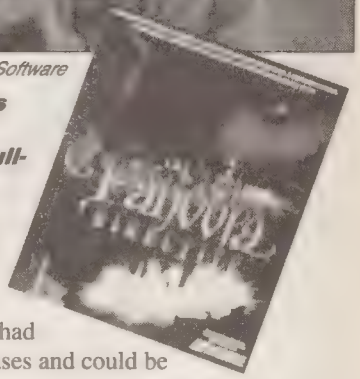
Full motion video is now a major part of games and those companies that didn't join'em went belly up or are only around thanks to shareware bins and those thousand and one cartoon character DOOM knock-offs.

Now games are being called "interactive movies." They are directed by Hollywood directors, have some big-name actors and some of the popular bands of today recording the soundtrack.

At the leading edge (or bleeding edge for the amount of times the gamer has to upgrade and the amount it costs him/her to play the interactive movie) has been Access.

Artwork supplied by Access Software

Kevin McCarthy is among the Hollywood stars who make an appearance in The Pandora Directive. The software, which feaures some full-motion video, takes private investigator Tex Murphy through seven different mysteries like Roswell in 1947.



The latest incarnation of Access Software's Tex Murphy adventures is "The Pandora Directive".

The game has all of the major Hollywood components in it and for the first time, in this reviewer's opinion at least, is the first title that is truly an interactive movie or as close as any game has come so far.

From beginning to end (there are seven different ones) the entire game is quality and has a real polished feeling to it.

The game itself opens like a film with a clip of full-motion video to give you a basic idea of the premise of the game, your role, a few of the main characters and a general idea of how to proceed.

You, the game player, are Tex Murphy, a wise-cracking detective in San Francisco in the year 2043. As you can imagine, things have changed in almost a half century. There has been a third world war, you drive around in a type of hover car and you live on the seedier side of town amongst a bunch of mutant humans. They got that way when exposed to a little excess radiation left over after the war.

Being a private investigator, you live from day to day and case to case. Lately, you haven't had many cases and could be considered a little down on your luck. Your rent is due, you owe a few of your neighbors money and you're feeling a little low.

As luck would have it, a stranger comes to you with a missing persons case.

As you trek through this interactive movie of a game, you'll go from Mayan Pyramids to the infamous 1947 UFO crash at Roswell, to a string of serial murders.

This game has a lot going for it, including some big name actors — Barry Corbin, Kevin McCarthy and Tanya Roberts. It is so good it is worth playing again just to experience another of the seven different endings.

Keeping all of this praise in mind, there is a downside to the game. Its requirements are high. This is especially so for someone who just upgraded their computer a year ago or more. They will find that their system just isn't cutting it. You know its sad when a game manual gives extensive advice on how to upgrade your computer, more so than advice on how to play the game. This is also the case for Links

LS — another Access product recently released.

I think developers should take a step back and realize that gaming is only one of the reasons computers are bought and not the only reason. They should also realize we are not all Bill Gates clones, i.e., loaded with dough, or even Gates wannabes. I would recommend you should see if the beast (your computer) meets the recommended specs and not the required specs before even attempting play.

Recommended hardware: *4X CD Rom drive, Pentium processor with SVGA Local Bus display, Hard Drive with 30 MB available, 16 MB RAM, 16 bit sound board.*

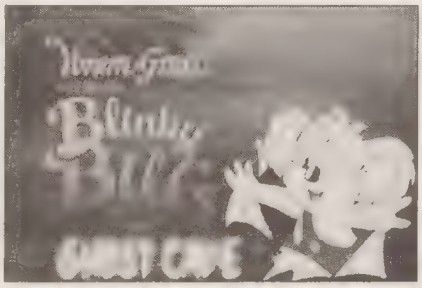
The game is also fully compatible with Win' 95 and MS-DOS. What this really means is the game was written to be run in DOS but can be run through Windows 95, just not successfully. So, if you meet the recommended hardware, shut down and re-boot to the MS-DOS prompt (not a DOS shell window — that just won't do it, and the game will be painfully slow and crash far too often).

Install and have a blast playing PI!

❑❑❑

Going Blinky

I must admit that when my editor gave me the brightly colored, cartoon covered box for my next assignment, I shuddered and thought, "Goes with the job, huh?" I certainly wasn't looking forward to it. What was I going to write about a game for little, I mean really little, kids? Oh well, here goes . . .



Based on an episode from the television series, "The Adventures of Blinky Bill," BLINKY BILL'S GHOST CAVE should be a hit for the really young computer geek-in-training (recommended age is three and over). It has many facets as a learning tool while its great cartoon graphics, sound effects and banjo music with a catchy beat should keep their attention.

Blinky Bill is a koala bear from the Land Down Under. He and his gang of friends, also Australian cartoon animals, take up the challenge to help their rabbit friends find a new home in this interactive adventure.

The story itself opens in Mr. Wombat's living room inside a big old tree trunk. From here youngsters can go in three different directions. Whenever help is needed, click on old Mr. Wombat. He also does the story and game narration with a distinct Aussie accent — great touch!

The story of the search for a new home offers 12 different pages along with text to follow the narrative. Players can choose to just listen and watch or, in hide and seek style, with the mouse, find the items, usually about a dozen on each page, and they will come to life in a comical way.

When ready to leave a page, taking the cursor to the lower right corner brings up a big green hand. Clicking it will turn the page. At any time a specific page can be chosen or repeated.

Also included is a series of memory games — nine different types of activity. Kids can test their memory of the story line. They can try to pick out the gang members, identify sounds and colors, match story characters with names, put together a jigsaw puzzle of the sequence of the story and identify the types of animals. When successful, congratulations are announced.

Thirdly, returning to Mr. Wombat's living room you are welcomed back to some more activities. Players can choose story characters to dress up with hats, wings, boots and so on. They can move the scenery around, color using a paint brush and palette or choose to erase. A click on the movie projector in the living room offers a picture show and some information on the real images of the Australian animals portrayed through cartoons in the story. Use the jigsaw pieces in the living room to put the story characters back together.

Now for observations. All movement is mouse rather than keyboard based. The maneuvering of the mouse will be used extensively and the speed needed increases toward the end of the story.

I don't know that a three year old would know to hold the mouse steady when clicking to make that big green hand turn the page and, of course, that's what it takes to make it work. Even at that it's a bit rusty. This, though, is my only criticism of the game.

All in all, the story and slide show are a great teaching tool with facts about the geography and animals of Australia.

The older kids can read along — the words can be highlighted to follow the narration.

Of course the memory games test the obvious and the whole package is entertaining as a bonus. Come to think of it, I do know something about kids. I've seen how interested my young cousins are in their father's computer and I've noticed they can watch a favorite video over, and over, and over. I suspect they would really get a lot of hours out of interactive Blinky Bill, and each time it will be a little different. What a bonus. Oh, by the way, I can see where parents would get a kick out of playing along on this one. It wasn't so bad after all.

Hardware requirements: *66 MHZ 486 DX/2 processor or better, 8 MB of Ram (12-16 MB preferred), 256 color-video with 640 X 480 res, Windows compatible 16 bit sound card, Double speed CD Rom drive or better, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95 Mouse or other pointing device.*

❑ Greg Vaillancourt's reviews of new software releases appears in each issue of Parsec.

Side Effects

Working Designs of Redding, CA., has released Dragon Force for SEGA's Saturn system.

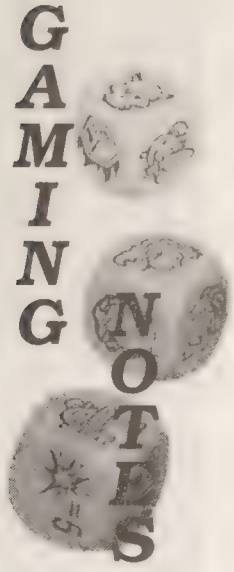
The role-playing game, the company's third for the SEGA system, has players taking on the part of one of eight warlords. After forming their armies, the commander sets out to conquer the seven other castles.

Soldiers in the conquered castles may or may not join the player's cause. The game is over when all the castles fall under the sway of a single player.

Dragon Force supports both SEGA's external backup RAM cartridge and SEGA's mouse peripheral.

Into the Void

Thursday mornings at 9:30
on CKLU FM
in Sudbury



Justin Mohareb

Random Character Generation . . . booo, hiss

I thought, for my first column, I'd write a column on "game systems I hate, and why," to let the reader know some of my biases.

It was brought to my attention that the qualities I hated in those games were pretty much the same across the board. It seems like the systems I dislike all seem to have a few things in common. . . . Hmm.

Dislikes have to spring from somewhere. Since my parents have never spent any time lecturing me (I never talk to my parents. I am lectured by them) on the relative merits of Call of Cthulu versus Rolemaster, and my classes never included debates on wether Champions or Heroes Unlimited was the premier superhero RPG, I'll have to assume it springs (surprise!) from my early gaming experiences.

As it is with 90 per cent of the RPGers. my earliest gaming experiences were with a D&D.

It was fine at the time, I suppose. I played with that group for a couple years, my halfling lion rider charging into battle with nary a thought of danger in his furred head.

But, in retrospect, I see now that there were a few quibbles I had with the basic system that have evolved into my current dislikes with certain game system mechanics in general. (Allow me to say that, while it is true that any of these quibbles could be circumvented by a creative GM, even the worst lemon will function well under a gifted and caring mechanic. I, however, want a brand-spanking new Porsche.)

So, instead of being "Game Systems I Hate," this will instead be "Game Mechanics I Hate".

The primary offender being Random Character Generation.

I don't play ANY games at this point which use Random Generation.

I, to be not at ALL blunt, severely dislike those systems. Why?

Because I am an advocate of that most rare of creatures, game balance. If my beginning character and your beginning character get into a fight, (unless I designed a non-combatant), I want equal chances.

I want your character and mine to have equal power levels (I know that many will say "No such animal, Moe." I'm aware of that.). And, I don't want you to be able to say "but I rolled that 18/00 strength!" Of course you did.

I play, for example, The Storyteller System from White Wolf.

A fine system, it allows players to build their characters in such a way that their basic attributes are divided into physical, social, and mental.

No one character will ever be strong in all three. While it is possible (through judicious expenditure of attributes) to have up to four attributes (out of nine) rated at four (out of five), the other attributes will suffer accordingly.

One of my favorite systems to date is Champions. After playing in the aforementioned AD&D game with a half-human/quarter-drow/quarter-demon Lothario with attributes above anything allowed by even Unearthed Arcana, the possibility that the player would have had to BUY all those abilities (ergo, they wouldn't have been able to afford them in any respectable HERO game), I fell in love. Here, I thought, would the balance be restored! Now, we must begin as equals, and struggle our way up the slopes toward being Heroes! I've never looked back.

The Storyteller System is a fine system, it allows players to build their characters in such a way that their basic attributes are divided into physical, social, and mental. strong in all three.

Give me points, or give me death!

★ ★ ★

I also have some problems with the The Level System of Advancement in certain roleplaying games.

(A short warning in the interim: these aren't the only two things I hate about gaming. Nor are they likely to be the two I hate most on any given day. In fact, hate may be too strong a word for my feelings on these mechanics. However, today, I hate them both.)

Only two systems I know of still use the level-class system: AD&D, which originated it, and the Palladium games (which borrowed it from AD&D).

This column isn't a direct attack on either of those games (although that option is still open in the future). It's meant to be an analysis of why I don't like the level system.

A brief overview of what I mean by

"level system" (If you've read AD&D or a Palladium game, skip to the next chapter). In a level system, the characters advance in ability by earning experience points which then go toward their required XP for their next level. The character's abilities increase uniformly with each level; health points increase, magical skill increases, talents increase. The methods of gaining xp varies. In AD&D, the majority of XP come from the slaying of monsters and sacking of treasure. Palladium's XP system tends to be less clear cut, relying much more on GM's intuition/whim and whatever the players can weasel out of him.

Now, that seems reasonable, doesn't it? No, it isn't. For a few reasons. My main quibble is that no one increases in ability in leaps and bounds. One day, you're an okay swordsman. Two months later, you're better. Six months later, better still. Meanwhile, you're getting tougher and, hey, where did these henchguys come from?

Now, not being unable to speak for anyone else, I'll posit examples from my own. When you study, you don't learn everything at the end of six months. One day, you'll understand page one. The next, you might get chapter one. Next week, Chapter two.

You don't suddenly learn everything in the manual. Knowledge increases by increments, piece by piece. It's only in hindsight that you see you've learned, slowly. And then, you know.

I prefer XP point-by-point expenditure systems, where the pc can decide to work on their swordsmanship, and increase their skill that way. By continued expenditure, they can become a highly-skilled warrior, but their dexterity will grow slowly in comparison. If you want, you can grow bit by bit, in one area, then another. Or, you can grow in bursts, one area to the next.

Another quibble I have with XP-level systems is the increasing spiral in expectations-needs. To look at it on a system level, take AD&D. As you go up in levels (through the slaying of monsters and the sacking of treasure), you find that you need more and more XP to go up. This begins the ever-increasing spiral of expectations. As you go up, you need more. You (the player) become an XP junkie, craving a bigger fix. You start only needing a little.

Then you need more.

Then more. Before you know it, you're laying waste to dimensions to get those extra 200,000 XP to make level 120. As you get higher, you need more. In Palladium, where you get a maximum of 700 XP for doing something superheroic, you'll be putting your sweet ass on the line constantly just to make fifth level.

In an XP expenditure system, you grow gradually. You can grow quite quickly when you start, but as you progress, you find it difficult to get much better (cause you're the Best, Babe). Hero seems to be an exception to this, as advancing from a skill level of 11- on a 3d6 costs the same as advancing to 30-, and buying you're tenth die of an Autofire HKA is the same as the first one. But, in most XP systems, advancing at higher levels is more expensive than lower ones.

Level systems are my single greatest peeve. I know that there's no such thing as a perfectly realistic RPG. No game can be a mirror of the way people act. But Level systems just suspend my disbelief on a thin, thin string. Then they hack at it because, hey, free XP.

❑❑❑

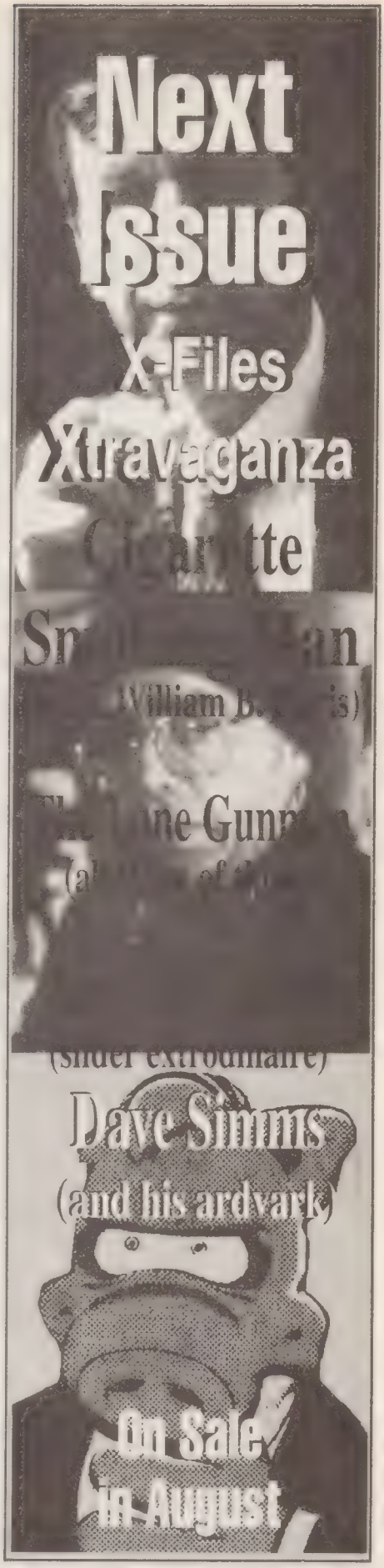
Postscript: Unless you've been living under a rock for the past few years, you've doubtless been introduced to the Collectible Card Game. There are CCG's from pretty much every game company these days. Except Palladium, which has a certain amusing irony to it.

Quite a few are based upon existing RPG's. Mythos, for example, is based upon Call of Cthulu, Chaosium's venerable 1930's horror RPG. One of the common complaints with CCG's is that it's so difficult and expensive to get into them.

Mythos has circumvented this by introducing the Mythos Standard Game. This is a pair of mythos decks, identical in each package, designed to be played against each other. One is Steadfast (the noble explorers of Mythos), the other is Corrupt (the servants of the horrid Outer Gods).

The set is a great game. It's an instant play (and the game is very easy to pick up), and has good play value, with both decks balanced with each other. It's a great game for CCG fans and die hard CoC investigators alike.

❑ Justin Mohareb is a long-time gamer, he performed his journalism school job placement at a game company. His column will now appear in each issue of Parsec.



By Emru Townsend

Working from a MegaTokyo lingerie shop and with plenty of time on their hands, the four members of the Knight Sabres battle errant cyborgs called Boomers in Bubblegum Crisis. The series is filled with music and action.

Music key element to Bubblegum Crisis

Before Ghost in the Shell, and before Akira, when Japanese animation fans wanted cyberpunk, they turned to the eight-part Bubblegum Crisis OAV (Original Animation Video) series.

The name may sound odd, but it's not without reason; the situation in the Blade Runner-esque MegaTokyo of 2032 is so tense, it's like bubblegum, a mere pinprick away from popping.

The "situation" is the increasing presence of Boomers—artificial cyborgs—running amok in the city. (These have been referred to as "illegal" Boomers, but we never see a legal one throughout the series. Go figure.) These Boomers are not-so-secretly controlled by the predominant Boomer manufacturer, the omnipresent and untouchable Genom Corporation. The AD (Advanced Defense) Police has been formed to deal with rampaging Boomers, but they're outnumbered and outgunned.

This is where the Knight Sabers come in — a vigilante/mercenary quartet of cute (naturally) women with plenty of high-tech gear and some free time to spend kicking Boomer butt. They are: Priss Asagiri, rock star and the team's spiritual leader; Linna Yamazaki, aerobics instructor; Nene Romanova, traffic cop and the group's communications officer; and Celia Stingray, the group's founder and leader, whose lingerie store acts as a front for the Knight Sabers' headquarters.

Despite its atmosphere, nods to Blade Runner, and various man-machine interfaces, Bubblegum Crisis is really more of a "lite" cyberpunk production. It has many of the surface features of cyberpunk, but never really takes them any further. (Of course, some say that cyberpunk is all about style over substance, so I suppose in that sense it might qualify.) The true key elements to Bubblegum Crisis are music, angst and action — all of which it delivers in spades. The score is, for the most part, significantly ahead of most anime; while hardly orchestral, the synthesizer-driven techno score generally fits the mood of MegaTokyo as seen by our heroes, far better than the recycled, repetitive soundtracks of many other productions. Most of the songs sung by Priss' voice actress, Kuniko Ohmori, are a cut above the standard Japanese-pop idol singer fare.

Continued on Page 45

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Scared Stiff and Loving It

An Interview with Don Hutchison

By
MICI GOLD

Photo Supplied

Editor Don Hutchison has found himself in the peculiar position of having to turn down "name" authors from the United States for his anthologies. The problem? They don't know Canada.

"Fear is fun," Canadian writer and editor Don Hutchison believes. "Vicarious fun, that is. It is a release valve for the genuine anxieties that confront us daily."

So he writes in the introduction to the first volume of Northern Frights (Mosaic Press), Canada's only ongoing dark fantasy/horror anthology. Though best known as editor of this award-nominated series, Hutchison has also written three books about the pulp magazines. In addition, he's spent more than 30 years working as a director/cinematographer in commercial, industrial and educational films.

He attributes his love of good stories to the pulp fiction he grew up with.

"The pulps influenced me a lot," he insists. "I was always into fantasy. I think it's probably in my bones. I grew up in an era when you could find science fiction and fantasy only in so-called pulp magazines. Pulps were a great source of story-telling."

Though the term "pulp" has become synonymous with bad writing, some of the first stories by great authors such as, Heinlein and Bradbury, appeared in those early magazines.

"To this day I think I have a sense of story-telling because the pulps dealt with telling stories," Hutchison recalls. "They didn't have time to be too obscure, too literary in tone."

Though Hutchison isn't looking for pulp fiction for Northern Frights, he does look for stories that, like the pulps, immediately grab the reader and keep up the suspense right to the end. He also requires that stories be either written by Canadians or set in Canada. His high standards have inspired some of Canada's rising writers—three stories from one volume have received nominations for last year's Aurora Awards. Those standards have frustrated some "name" writers.

"Many's the time, I've written a long letter of rejection to a "name," and then found a story by someone I'd never heard of that was really good." He suspects that big name American writers simply don't know enough about Canada. "You can't just change Denver to Toronto. It doesn't work."

Because Hutchison goes for the story, Northern Frights has received critical praise in both Canada and the U.S. Several stories have been reprinted in Ellen Datlow's "Year's Best" horror, the British Best New Horror and the now-defunct "Year's Best" horror by Daw Books, which he regards as the best indication of success. But when he began the series, he wasn't sure whether Canada had enough horror writers to fill even one volume with original material or what Canadian horror really was.

"If New England's witch-laden woods and the haunted Gothic south have so inspired authors, it occurred to me that the Canadian North—that brooding land of unexplored wilderness—should provide similar phantasmic raw material," he explains in the introduction to volume one. "The vast forest, the wild mountain ranges, and the awesome frozen void above the tree line — are enough to stretch anyone's imagination."

He was delighted to discover that the writers were there, although many of them were writing only science fiction until he personally persuaded them to try dark fantasy. Moreover they seemed to agree with Hutchison about the subject matter —especially about winter, the ultimate Canadian horror story.

"One of the reviewers said that there seemed to be a lot of stories where the people are being driven bonkers by the cold!" Hutchison admits with a laugh. "I could certainly relate to that."

While editing and cinematography may appear to have little in common, Hutchison sees them as parts of a creative continuum.

"I got into film work because I love movies, reading, fiction, acting — all these

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Internet email address: newfront@magi.com

things. They're all inter-related. I think, basically, I'm a creative person. Editing may not seem creative to writers," he hastens to add, "but I'm dealing with creativity, let's say. Putting the book together is a creative act. It has a distinct personality, and part of that is mine."

Although he doesn't consider himself a writer in the strictest sense, he wanted to convey to others in some way the enjoyment he'd received from the pulp magazines. "The first two books I did were on genres within the pulps," he says. "One was called The Superfeds (Starmont 1988), about the G-men era in popular culture, as well as the pulps. I did a long introduction that was a history of that era and reprinted a number of G-men short stories. The second one was called It's Raining Corpses in Chinatown (Starmont 1989), and it's about the Yellow Peril theme in literature and movies of the day."

I think, basically, I'm a creative person.

His recent book, The Great Pulp Heroes (Mosaic Press,1996), which he researched for nearly 30 years, is a bit different.

"It's a history of the pulp magazine heroes like the Shadow and Doc Savage and Captain Future, and so on, and the people who wrote them. I tried to write it as a popular history book, with a lot of fun in it, hopefully, and some humor."

Although older readers might enjoy the book because they remember these heroes, "It's young people who today revere Doc Savage," Hutchison notes. "They've read all the Bantam paperback reprints and comic books . . . They know a lot about those characters, and they want to know more about them."

Hutchison's love of pulps has permeated his film career, too. Widely known for his part in filming the movie In Advance of the Landing, he feels his background in science fiction greatly shaped the movie. "All the way through it, a lot of the things we shot — pulp covers, comic books covers — all these things were mine! I just had a ball doing it, interviewing a lot of the people in the U.S. and Canada who were UFO devotees. A lot of them read science fiction or they had old copies of Fate Magazine . . . So we had a lot of great chats."

Hutchison is set to produce volume four of Northern Frights and meanwhile, he's working on another pulp book, this time about the Mounties! "I got an idea for a book called Blazing Tunics — I borrowed the title idea from Mel Brooks' Blazing Saddles," he confesses. "I'll do a long introduction and history of the myth of the Mounties and run some of the old preposterous stories."

Unlike those works which view Canadian culture as a painful moral duty, these books promise to be entertaining and, above all, fun.

Side Effects

Central Park Media has announced the release of Patlabor: The Mobile Police — The New Files Collector Set.

The five-volume set (480 minutes) follows the efforts of Tokyo Police Department's Patrol Labors in its battle against the rise of labor crimes. These crimes are committed by humanoid-type, multi-purpose robots that have been designed for industrial and heavy construction uses.

The entire set carries a suggested retail price of $119.95 (U.S.). Volume 1 has a suggested retail price of $29.95 (U.S.) Both are subtitled in English.

❑❑❑

Central Park Media has also announced the release of Dancougar Volume Four and Space Warriors.

Both videos have suggested retail prices of $19.95 (U.S.).

Dancougar (120 minutes) follows the Cyber Beast Force in its efforts to disable a deadly laser in the Gobi Desert. Volume Four contains episodes 16 to 20 of the series and is subtitled in English.

Space Warriors (75 minutes) details the adventures of a space pirate who has embarked on a mission of revenge against the chairman of an influential corporation. Now, a psychic warrior must uncover the connection between the pirate and an innocent teacher — a secret that could topple one of the largest corporations in the galaxy. The video is dubbed in English.

Continued from Page 43

Between Priss' moodiness and Celia's grim determination, there's enough angst to fill a month's worth of Marvel comics. Even though Linna seems perennially optimistic and Nene is a bit of a throwback to the "cute anime chick" school, the two team leaders and the unfortunates they try to help have plenty of angst to spare. But if you're used to Japanese animation you're probably used to melodrama, so it's only a problem if you're attempting to watch more than two episodes in one sitting.

Bubblegum Crisis

☆ AnimEigo
☆ 1987-1991
☆ Available on videocassette and laserdisc in subtitled and dubbed formats

As for the action, it's hard to complain. Let's face it: if you've got big, ugly cyborgs, four women in power armor with cool weapons and fast motorcycles, and a futuristic urban environment, you've got the raw ingredients right there. Bubblegum Crisis goes the extra mile and delivers not only good action scenes, but great ones, with animation and editing ranging from competent to stellar, combined with very effective choreography. The Knight Sabers fight very convincingly as a team.

The only problem is, the action scenes might be a little too good.

In many cases, particularly in the first three episodes, it appears as if so much care is put into the action scenes that everything else suffers. Camera pans across static images substitute for actual animation; character movement drops to only a few frames per second; dust is clearly visible on the cels; need I say more?

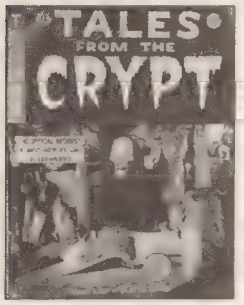
Still, after the third episode things pick up in terms of animation quality and story direction. Though it has a few rough edges, Bubblegum Crisis holds up as an enjoyable SF/action series.

❑ Emru Townsend, aka: emru@cam.org, is editor of fps: the Magazine of Animation on Film and Video. His column appears in each issue of Parsec.

Vault opened for Tales history

There's always been a soft spot in my heart for Tale From the Crypt.

Over the years, I've managed to piece together a small run of the original EC comic books and I've become a fan of the over-the-top television series. Now St. Martin's Press (through McClelland & Stewart) has released the Tales From the Crypt coffee table book.



The book details the history of the comic book — which fell prey to comic book violence hysteria in the mid-50s — and provides a pictorial history of the covers for the entire series and its sister publications like The Vault of Horror.

The book also offers episode synopsis of the television series including a listing of stars and directors.

To round out the book, author Digby Diehl has included a section on the latest movie and a brief run-down of collectible items on the market.

Diehl deserves applause for compiling this exhaustive, beautifully illustrated collection of facts and rumors about EC and its creations. His love of the subject shines through page after page and makes this book a wonderful addition to your personal EC library.

— Chris Krejlgaard

❑❑❑

Sean Stewart's latest novel is a brooding fantasy of the "Alternate Worlds" school. Magic works in the world of Resurrection Man (Ace Books), but this is not some run-of-the-mill urban fantasy novel with elven gangs roaming the mean streets and flashing switch-blade wands.

In this world, magic has only manifested since near the end of World War II and it's had some influence on social and political events. The assassination of John F. Kennedy went ahead despite warnings by an oracle, but brother Robert lived to become president because he listened to that same oracle. Architectural design and medicine are influenced by belief in sympathetic magic and minotaurs run roughshod in urban slums.

Dante Ratkay, the novel's lead character, is the Resurrection Man. He's an angel. He's not some heavenly messenger, but a person born with a particular magical talent. A talent which, in his case, is not necessarily appreciated, wanted or even under strict control.

But that's nothing compared to his other problem. His talent has indicated he has only one week left to live and, thanks to an atheist father who quotes classical Greek and Latin writers in place of scripture, Dante has been raised with no hope there's anything in store for him after he's been buried.

Resurrection Man unfolds like a fantastic version of the classic film, D.O.A., with Dante rushing off to try to resolve a fistful of personal dilemmas before the end. Included is the distant relationship between he and his father, the mystery of his foster brother Jet's birth, the long-ago disappearance of his aunt Sophie's lover and, finally, the fact that, like it or not, Dante is an angle.

"Not a power, but a conduit for power," as Jewel explains to Dante at one point. In the end, Resurrection Man depicts the soul-searching Dante has come to endure in order to save himself.

A worthwhile read.

— Gregg Chamberlain

❑❑❑

Decades before the comic-book version of Superman bought the farm, television's Man of Steel ended his run in a Beverly Hills bedroom with a bullet to the head in 1959.

It has been one of those morbid mysteries whether or not George Reeves committed suicide or was murdered.

Reeves, the accepted story goes, was despondent over not being able to find an acting job after the Adventures of Superman went of the air two years earlier. So he committed suicide.

However, authors Sam Kashner and

Turns out that the Man of Steel was really weak of flesh

Nancy Schoenberger offer a version of events that demonstrates Reeves may have been murdered. Seems the Man of Steel was weak of flesh and had carried on with the married wife of an MGM executive. When he broke off their relationship and began a romance with another woman, the ex-lover became unbalanced and saw to it that Reeves wouldn't be with another woman — ever.

The authors demonstrate a tenacious investigative fervor and the book casts Reeves in a sympathetic light. In their hands, he is a man whose talents are unrecognized and underutilized. Worse, he is the victim of manipulation by the three women in his life.

Like voyeurs, Kashner and Schoenberger provide readers with a harrowing tale of the madness that inhabits Hollywood's dark side. But with the passage of 40 years and the fact that Reeves is little more than a footnote in Superman history, it is an unnecessary look through the keyhole.

— Jon Mayall

❑❑❑

By way of gifts of Riddle of the Wren and later Moonheart, I have introduced friends to Charles de Lint. They have alternately cursed and blessed me.

Cursed me because once they began reading de Lint's books, they could not put them down until they'd gotten to the last page. I've been blessed for that very reason.

I have always considered it a real loss for those of us who can't get enough of de Lint that most of his paperback output has been limited to his novels. But in the last couple of years that has changed first with the publication of Dreams

Latest Tor offering a welcome

Underfoot and, now, with the Ivory and the Horn (Tor), both of which deal with Newford, a city which almost seems like an extension of de Lint's Ottawa setting where most of his longer works take place.

They're all here in The Ivory and the Horn — Jilly Coppercorn and her bohemian friends, the Grasso Street Angel and her collection of lost and strayed humanity, the old hippies who run the Quicksilver Messenger Service plus Coyote and all the other "little mysteries" that share space with humans in de Lint's world.

There are three things the stories in Ivory and the Horn have in common: Newford, the air of magick that drifts through each tale and de Lint's almost magical talent for making his characters come alive. Beyond those similarities, the stories in this collection demonstrate well the broad range of de Lint's fantastic vision, his point of view and insight into the human spirit.

The Ivory and the Horn is a welcome addition to my de Lint collection and will be a treasured addition to your library too.

— Gregg Chamberlain

❑❑❑

Some of the trappings of science fiction have become so much a part of modern culture that it's often hard not to draw the line at what is and what is not science fiction.

At best, F.I.A.T. is borderline sci•fi and that's only by stretching the borders

At best, F.I.A.T. (Commonwealth Publications) is borderline science fiction and that's only by really stretching the borders, I will concede that it could be possible that the United States military may actually have prototype laser weapons for helicopter gunships and not just for targeting systems either.

F.I.A.T. is another entry in the secret government anti-crime squad genre of the thriller yarn. Sci•fi readers may find one of the characters intriguing. Thanks to a stray bullet from a drug-crazed junkie's gun, the two hemispheres of Nicole Chandler's brain have been severed. But an experimental technique in cybernetic protein chip technology has "healed" her to the extent that she can function normally with the added benefit of being able to communicate with computers. Which comes in very handy as her teammates battle drug czars, both domestic and foreign, bent on destroying America for fun and profit.

Action-adventure fans will really enjoy this book. Science fiction collectors may want to pick up the first installment in what will likely become a series. I would suggest, though, sticking to the TekWar novels if you like action-oriented sci•fi.

— Gregg Chamberlain

❑❑❑

Greg Kihn's name may be more familiar to rock'n'roll fans for his two hits of '87, "Our Love's in Jeopardy" and "The Break-up Song," both of which received a great deal of radio play. These days Kihn divides his time between touring with the Greg Kihn Band, doing a radio show in San Francisco and preparing his next album. Judging by Horror Show, Kihn must have spent all his spare time watching B-horror movies. His love of low-budget scream flicks shows in every page of this tribute to the genre.

Monster magazine reporter Clint Stockburn tracks down the reclusive Landis Woodley, the uncrowned King of the Drive-in Chillers and a director who was legendary for being able to churn out incredible celluloid with almost no budget to speak of.

Stockburn worms his way into Woodley's home and confidence. As a reward, he learns a secret that the aging horror director has kept for more than 40 years. A secret which includes the true story behind the filming of Woodley's masterpiece, Cadaver, and the frightening aftermath of the ultimate Hollywood Halloween Party.

Horror Show is a good first novel. A nice, easy read with no pretensions and some good, solid characterization. Half the fun is trying to figure out what characters are patterned after notables from the creature features era of '50s films.

— Gregg Chamberlain

Who's Who

Robyn Meta Herrington was born and raised in Australia. She moved to Calgary, Alta., in 1978. Since then, she's worked in various places within the University of Calgary Library, and has been married to the same patient man — Bruce — for 15 years. When she is not writing, which isn't very often, she enjoys glass-blowing and will work it in a story — some day.

Gregg Chamberlain is a journalist based in Revelstoke, B.C. His articles and book reviews have appeared in a number of issues of Parsec. He serves as Parsec's West Coast correspondent.

D.K. Latta lives in Ontario and has recently had his work accepted by such magazines as ON SPEC, Adventures of Sword & Sorcery and others. He is a frequent contributor to Canada's S&S/fantasy magazine, Bardic Runes. This is his first appearance in Parsec.

Mici Gold has written interviews for Sol Rising, the newsletter of the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy, and for TransVersion. She lives in Toronto.

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Conventions

May 16-18

Keycon 14: Winnipeg Crowne Plaza, Winnipeg. MB. Scheduled guest: Kevin J. Anderson, Margaret Weis, Ruth Thompson. Registration: Until Oct. 31, $25; until Feb. 28, $30; until April 30, $35; at the door, $50. Information: P.O. Box 3178, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4E7

May 17

WhoParty Eleven: Best Western Roehampton Hotel, Toronto, Ont. Scheduled guests: Anneke Wills (Polly) and John Levene (Sgt. Benton) and Sophie Aldred (Ace). Registration: $18 at the door (DWIN member rate: $15). Information: The Doctor Who Information Network P.O.Box 912, Station F, Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 2N9 http://www.interlog.com/~schrist/dwin/who_party.html

May 23-25

1st Borden ASL Tournament: CFB Borden, Ont. Preregistration: $20 by May 20 May. Information: Base Borden Wargamers Club, 207 Saskatchewan Blvd., Borden, Ont. L0M 1C0

June 14-16

Ad Astra 17: Hotel unconfirmed, Toronto. Scheduled guest: Steven Brust. Registration: $30 before May 1 and $35 at the door. Information: P.O. Box 7276, Station A, Toronto M5W 1X9.

July 11-13

Kingcon '97: Saint John Trade and Convention Centre, Saint John, N.B. Scheduled guests: Barbara Hambly. Registration: $25 before July 1, $30 at the door.$5 two-hour walk-through pass. Information: 465 Brian Lane, Saint John, NB E2M 1R5.

July 18-20

Toronto Trek 11: International Plaza Hotel, Toronto, Ont. Scheduled guests: David Rossi, Eric Stilwell. Registration: TBA. Information: Suite 0116, Box 187, 65 Front St. West, Toronto, M5J 1E6; (416) 699-4666; www.io.org/~kcozens/ttrek.

Aug. 9

Anime North: The Mitchener Institute, 222 St. Patrick St., Toronto. Registration: $10 before July 15, $12 at the door. Information/Registration: P.O. Box 24090, Dufferin Mall Postal Outlet, 900 Dufferin St., Toronto M6H 4A0

Aug. 14-17

Dracula 97: Los Angeles, Ca.Information: Elizabeth Miller, Box 23340, Churchill Square P.O., St. John's, Nfld., A1B 4J9 or emiller@plato.ucs.mum.caj or from Gordon Melton, Box 91611, Santa Barbara, Ca. 92130-1611.

Sept. 26-28

Concept '97: Hotel unconfirmed, Montreal, PQ. Scheduled guest: Lois McMaster Bujold and Wayne Barlowe. Information: P.O. Box 405, Station H, Montreal, PQ. H3G 2L1.

Parsec assumes no responsibility for changes in hotels, guests, prices or date. It is the sole responsibility of organizers to inform the editors of any changes prior to publication.

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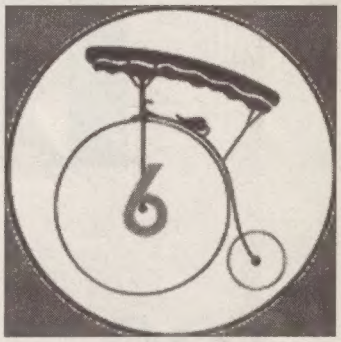
Welcome to the village

1997 marks the 30th anniversary of The Prisoner. argueably the most innovative and original programs put on television. Patrick McGoohan (late of Braveheart) will forever be identified with the number six.

Now, lets see how well you remember life at that quaint seaside village.



Like last issue, jot your answers down and send them to Brain Teaser c/o Parsec, Unit G, Suite 108, 1942 Regent St., Sudbury Ont., P3E 3Z9 — you might just win a mini sci-fi library.

Next issue, we'll give you the answers to our recent Red Dwarf quiz.

1. How many episodes of The Prisoner were made?

2. What type of car was McGoohan driving during the opening of each program?

3. What was the number of the agent trying to break McGoohan?

4. What was the agent and his organization trying to learn from McGoohan?

5. What is the name of the series' creator?

6. What was the name of the village's guardian?

7. Besides Number 6, there was only one other regular member of the cast, who was he?

8. What is the real name of the resort where some of the village scenes were shot?

9. What is the address of Number 6's home in London?

10. Complete this line:
"A still tongue makes . . . "

11. What did the village's guardian look like?

12. The guardian that appeared on the series was vastly different than the original conception. Time for a tough question: what was the guardian originally supposed to look like?

13. What is the name of the abode occupied by the agent responsible for breaking Number 6?

14. What is the question Number 6 continually asks his captors?

15. What is Number Six's response when he is told "You are Number 6"

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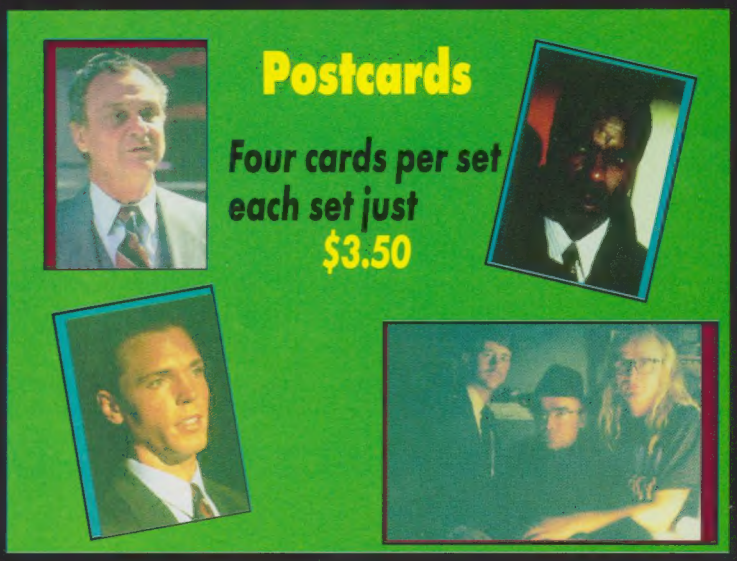

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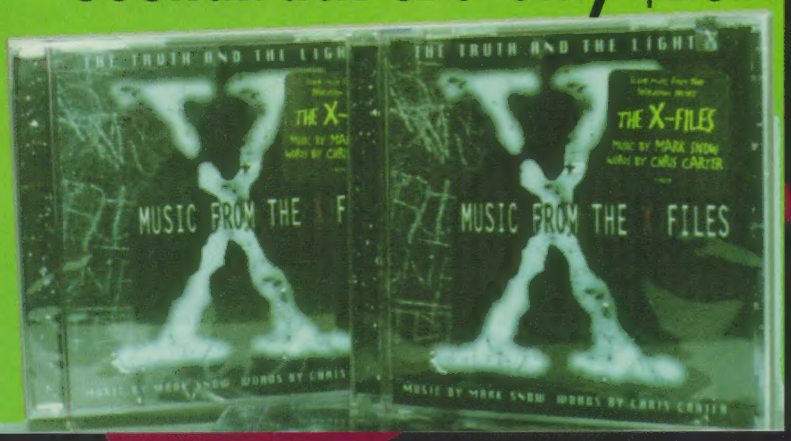

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